BREAKING THE PATTERN

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This handbook was developed by and for Alberta citizens, to help assaulted women and their families. Several hundred Albertans contributed ideas, experience and materials, in the hope they could help people in their own and other communities.

In that spirit of helpful co-operation, readers are encouraged to photocopy and distribute any or all portions of this handbook.

Additional copies of this handbook are available from:

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BREAKING THE PATTERN

How Alberta Communities Can Help Assaulted Women And Their Families

NOVEMBER 1985

Alberta
SOCIAL SERVICES
AND COMMUNITY HEALTH

BREAKING THE PATTERN

How Alberta Communities Can Help Assaulted Women And Their Families

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BREAKING THE PATTERN

How Alberta Communities Can Help Assaulted Women And Their Families

WHERE TO START

You wouldn't have opened this handbook if you were not concerned about family violence.

You are not alone.

Hundreds — perhaps thousands — of Albertans are working in their communities (maybe your community) to understand family violence, to change attitudes, to help those caught in the cycle of violence.

This handbook was developed by and for Alberta citizens who are concerned about family violence, and would like to know more about the problem and how they can help.

To help stop family violence in your community, you need to ...

1. Understand the problem;
2. Understand what may be needed;
3. Take action in your community.

THIS HANDBOOK gives you basic information about the three steps:

SECTION ONE helps you UNDERSTAND THE PROBLEM:
- how and why it happens;
- what happens to people in violent relationships;
- how our society may contribute to the problem.

SECTION TWO helps you UNDERSTAND WHAT'S NEEDED:
- by helping those in abusing relationships;
- by those trying to help;
- by the community.

SECTION THREE suggests COMMUNITY ACTION STEPS:
- what one person can do;
- how a group of concerned citizens can work to ensure that "what's needed" becomes available in their community.

THE RESOURCE KIT enclosed with the handbook tells where to get more specific information:
- what written material, films, and so on, are available;
- names and addresses of possible resource people;
- what services are available in Alberta.

HOW THIS HANDBOOK CAME ABOUT

This handbook is living proof that one person can make a difference.

The one person was Helen Nimco, the director of Family and Community Support Services in Banff.

Helen became concerned about family violence in her own community, and she started looking for information. What she got was a tangle of red tape. It took her a year and a half to sort out where to get information about family violence, what services existed, what services did not exist, and who was responsible for what.

Helen's background, and her job, mean she is better able than most people to find her way through bureaucracies. She thought, "If it took me a year and a half, what chance would someone else have?"

She decided there should be some sort of provincial handbook, to tell other concerned citizens what help was available, where to find it, and what other communities had done. In short, where to start.

Helen talked to other people, in her own and other communities. For her own understanding, she spent time in a women's emergency shelter. She made some phone calls, wrote letters, hosted meetings. Items showed up in some newspapers. Some M.L.A.'s heard about the problem. And Helen wrote a proposal.

Her proposal ended up on the desk of Katrine McKenzie, Director of the provincial Office for the Prevention of Family Violence. Katrine was enthusiastic about the idea. The provincial government agreed that a Handbook was needed, and agreed to co-ordinate and fund the project.

Early on, it was decided that "family violence" was too broad a topic to cover in one handbook, and the focus was narrowed to "assaulted women and their families." The department seconded Shirley Philippe from Edmonton Region Consultation Services to co-ordinate the project, and contracted Bonnie Hutchinson, a private consultant, to write the handbook.

Because the request came from a community person, was supported by other community people, and was intended to help communities across the province, it was agreed that community people should be asked to help with the project.

Regional co-ordinators in Lethbridge, Calgary, Camrose, Edmonton, Hinton, St. Paul and Grande Prairie contacted about 140 people who attended regional meetings.* They talked about what should go into the handbook. More important, they shared experiences, compared notes, and learned more about each other's pressures and biasses. After the meetings, many participants sent information that had been valuable to them, in hope that it would be of value to people in other communities. When the first draft of the handbook was ready, people from across the province read it and made numerous suggestions.*

And so this handbook has evolved, based on the experiences of Alberta citizens. The handbook itself is general enough to be used for many years. The resource kit telling where to get more specific information will be continuously updated. In addition, it is intended to start a newsletter, so Alberta citizens concerned about family violence can stay in touch, and learn from one another.

As Helen Nimco knows, people talking to each other can make things happen.

**The names of those who helped are on the last page of the handbook.*

A LETTER FROM SHIRLEY AND BONNIE

Normally, co-ordinators and authors are supposed to be invisible. Only their work should be public. But we want to deviate a bit from custom and tell you something about working on this handbook.

Why? For two reasons. First, family violence is itself a deviation, and normal customs and policies do not always help deal with family violence. Secondly, what happened to us as we worked on this project has happened to other people who, like you, are concerned about family violence.

A funny thing happened on the way to the typewriter. We couldn't stay faceless and nameless behind our cool, professional roles.

When we began working on this handbook, we knew it was worthwhile and needed. We were excited by the community input, pleased to be working together, and a little scared by the scope of the project — all reasonable reactions.

There was just one thing we were not quite prepared for: the emotion that caught us as we immersed ourselves in the topic of family violence.

Neither of us were new to the topic. Both of us, in our own lives, through our friends, in our work, had been confronted by abusive relationships. Both of us had practical experience in community approaches to the problem. We should have been prepared.

And yet, as we read the literature, as we tried to understand what community people had told us, we had moments of overwhelming anger — not at men, not at women, but at the pain and injustice some people must live through. We had other moments of despair: "Where do we start?"

We heard horror stories of services that did not serve; we studied the dynamics of abusive relationships; and ancient memories began to surface. We re-lived painful experiences long forgotten. We each said, at some point, "I thought I dealt with that long ago. I can't believe it's still there."

When friends, relatives and colleagues learned we were working on "something to do with battered wives," we ran into all the reactions that every community group encounters at some point:

- "I know this couple who ..." and
- "Don't you think some women ask for it? ..." and
- "I've never been able to understand why women stay if they're being beaten ..." and
- "Give the batterers a taste of their own medicine and that'd solve the problem ..." and
- "Make sure you don't sound like militant feminists ..." and
- "Your project is a waste of time because you can't help anyway ..."

We did not have the luxury of quitting the project. A lucky thing. Because as we dug in and plowed on, we heard other stories about:

- Weekly papers who run regular features to help the public understand and care about family violence;
- Communities working co-operatively to educate themselves, and to plan a co-ordinated regional approach to the problem;
- "Anger Management" sessions attended by abusing men who learn more constructive ways to express their anger;
- Elected officials willing to give political and financial support;
- Police, counsellors, and other "front line" people taking special courses so they will handle incidents of family violence more effectively;
- Best of all, we heard of people who have broken their own cycle of violence, and are now working to help others.

So why are we telling you all this? Because our experience might be your experience.

Working on this project has reinforced what we (and maybe you) already know:

1. ***Family violence triggers personal emotions as well as community reactions. It touches our deepest values and beliefs.***
2. ***Family violence is a tangle of issues: individual and community, political and historical, legal and social.***
3. ***We need to understand the problem before we rush into developing community services.***
4. ***We need to deal with community attitudes as well as the immediate needs of people caught in violent relationships.***
5. ***We need to work together, and be kind to one another, while we learn how to help assaulted women and their families.***

Nobody said it was easy.

But if this handbook does nothing else, it demonstrates that **there is hope**. People talking together can make things happen. We **can** make a difference.

Across Alberta are caring and dedicated citizens who have already accomplished much. You're in good company.

We wish you well.

Shirley Philippe, Project Co-ordinator
Bonnie Hutchinson, Writer
1985

BREAKING THE PATTERN

How Alberta Communities Can Help Assaulted Women And Their Families

SECTION ONE:
UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEM

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SECTION ONE: UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEM

A. PROFILE OF A VIOLENT RELATIONSHIP*

If we're going to help those in violent relationships, we need to understand their situation. But sometimes we shy away from stories of violence between husband and wife, because the stories may seem so extreme, or so shocking, or so far from our own experience. It may be hard to imagine how a loving relationship could deteriorate to the point of violence.

And yet, as we come to understand abusive relationships, we may see that the sources of violence are not so far from any of us. Violent incidents do not occur in a vacuum. Though each abusive relationship is unique, common patterns do occur.*

The following example is a composite of many stories. We tell this story to illustrate how a violent relationship can happen:

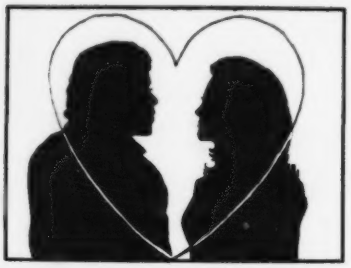
1. Courtship

She could be a teenager in an oppressive home situation, or an independent woman developing a career.

She may be attracted to him because he seems strong, exciting or romantic. He may be attracted to her because she seems fragile and in need of protection, or because she seems glamorous and independent. They probably have a strong sexual attraction.

He may be jealous or possessive of her. She may find this flattering, believing his jealousy is a sign he really loves her.

Though either or both of them may appear confident, it's likely that inside they are unsure of themselves. They may have low self-esteem. Either or both of them may have experienced violence as a child. Almost certainly, being together makes them feel good.

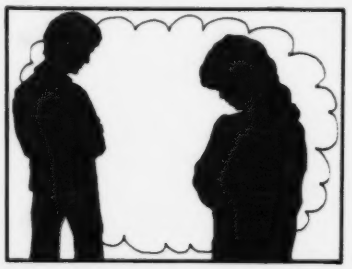


2. Commitment

At some point, they become a "couple." Whether legally married or living together, they take on the traditional roles of wife and husband.

He expects her to be "a good wife" who accommodates his needs and cares for him. She wants to be "a good wife" — one who pleases her husband. Though she may be assertive in other situations, in her relationship with him she slips into a more passive role, perhaps appreciating that she now has someone who cares about her. They both believe, though they may not be aware of it, that the wife is responsible for the happiness of a household.

He is dependent on her for emotional support, to create for him a loving environment, to make him feel masculine. She is dependent on him to take charge, to be the dominant one, to make her feel feminine. She may become financially dependent on him. They meet each other's needs for a while. Their mutual dependence draws them together, and they are probably happy with their relationship.



3. Tension

Things begin to go sour. There may be an external source of pressure — trouble at work or financial pressure. He may begin drinking heavily. Often the couple's first pregnancy changes the tone of their relationship.

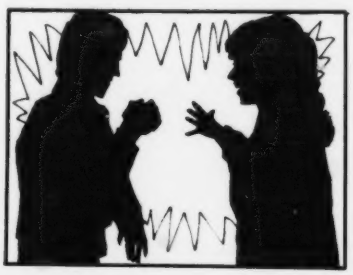
She has a harder time anticipating what he wants. He feels cheated: a man's home is his castle and the castle is not measuring up. He may believe you have to keep wives in line. He begins to attack her

Yes, there are women who assault men. Of these, many women are striking back after years of being beaten by their men. By far the majority of assaulted adults are women abused by the men they live with. We therefore use the more typical situation — women assaulted by men — in the examples in this Handbook.

verbally with insults, putdowns, name-calling, accusations. He may begin to check on her, to control where she goes and who she sees. The mind games begin.

She is hurt and confused. She tries harder to please him — maybe special meals, maybe different make-up. The harder she tries, the less he respects her, the more he blames her, and the more she blames herself. They both believe her job is to please him. He is not pleased, so there must be something wrong with her.

As he becomes more critical and more oppressive, she becomes more passive and less sure of herself. She feels more guilty. The tension escalates.



4. The first violent incident

During an argument, he hits her. They are both shocked.

He begs forgiveness and promises it will never happen again. He doesn't know what got into him — pressure at work or maybe a little too much to drink. She agrees with him. He wasn't himself. Surely if he loved her he wouldn't hit her, not really. It must be an isolated incident.

He is kind and loving, more loving than he has been for months. Once again they experience tenderness and passion, more intense in the wake of their violent emotions. The magic is back.

They do not discuss the incident. They do not want to believe it happened, so it didn't. Why take a chance on spoiling their fragile harmony?

The intensity of their emotion, and their mutual denial, draw them closer, making them even more dependent on one another.

But a barrier has been broken.

5. It happens again ... and again

Their emotional closeness begins to deteriorate. Tension begins to build again. The insults and accusations start; she tries harder to anticipate his every whim.

Another explosive incident. This time they are not so shocked when he attacks her. Again he is contrite and loving. He says what she wants to hear. She wants it to be true, so she believes him. Again they feel closer for a while — another "honeymoon" stage of tenderness and loving, entrapping them further.

The cycle repeats itself more frequently: tension build-up, violent explosion, and the honeymoon.

At this point, she probably does not consider herself an abused woman. The reality hurts too much to acknowledge, so she denies it. Instead, she feels guilty, tries to accommodate him (she can't), tries to make the honeymoon stage last (it doesn't). He does not consider himself an abusing husband. After all, he loves her. She hasn't required medical attention after the blows. He didn't draw blood. He hasn't really hurt her, just kept her in line.

They both make excuses for him: he had an unhappy childhood, he's under pressure these days, it's only when he's drinking. They both blame her: if she has been more understanding, if she hadn't said the wrong thing, he would not have exploded. She should know better than to annoy him when he's drinking.

They both maintain their cloak of silence. They don't want anyone to know what goes on behind their closed doors. Ironically, the worse the situation gets, the more they are cut off from other people, and the more dependent they are on one another.

6. The pattern is set

The cycle continues: tension build-up, violent explosion, honeymoon. The violent incidents become more serious, and the honeymoons are shorter.

By now their tenderness and affection happen only during the honeymoon periods — after a beating. But though once the tenderness made her believe he cared about her, now it may feel like another violation. And though once he kept her with promises ("It will never happen again") now he may use threats ("I'll kidnap the children").

Her anxiety and guilt turn to fear. She doesn't know when the next attack will happen, or why. Her self-esteem drops. She blames herself because she can't control the situation; she feels helpless and powerless, ashamed and humiliated. She begins to believe maybe she deserves the assaults. Maybe if she could be a better wife, he would not be so angry. But sometimes he is good to her after the beatings; he really is a good man; he really does love her. Maybe this time the emotional closeness will last.

One day she thinks, "He doesn't hit me because he is drunk, he drinks for an excuse to hit me." Sometimes when he walks in the door, she knows it's going to be a bad night. As a survival tactic, she may provoke fights, unconsciously wanting to speed up the cycle so they can get the violence over with. He accuses her of pushing him into violence. Sometimes she does — as a way to end for awhile the unbearable tension. Physical abuse may be easier to tolerate than the emotional and verbal abuse that precedes it. Outsiders may see that one or the other of them causes the violence. In reality, like the jailer and the prisoner, they are both locked in the cycle of violence.

7. Coming and Going

Something breaks the cloak of silence. Perhaps she needs medical attention, or neighbors call the police, or she is afraid for the children and talks to someone. Their violence becomes public.

Now begins the most frustrating stage for those who try to help. Outsiders do not understand how seductive the cycle of violence is, or how powerful the couple's bond to one another. Outsiders see only that he hits her and she goes back to him. Trying to help the couple may seem futile.

She cannot leave because she needs to believe in the times he is good to her, because she fears his threats, because she does not see any options. By now, she is a pulverized human being. She may drink or take pills to blot out the pain. She feels worthless, unloveable, humiliated. She does not believe she could make it on her own, or that she can escape the campaign of terror.

What is less obvious is that, even though he may blame her, beneath his aggressive exterior, he too feels worthless and unloveable. He cannot imagine being without her. He needs her emotional support, yet he is good to her only when he fears losing her. He does everything in his power to drive her away (verbal attacks, beating her, sexual assault, hitting the children), and then everything in his power to get her back ("I'll go for counselling, I'll quit drinking, you have no right to break up our family, you'd starve without me, I'll find you and kill you, I need you, I'll never hit you again").

Outsiders find it hard to understand that their need for each other is as powerful as their need to break away. They are trapped in their violent relationship. He is compelled to drive her away and win her back; she must leave and return. Most likely, they will advance and retreat numerous times before they can change the cycle of violence.

But each time she leaves him and returns, there is more danger. The next incident is likely to be more violent, and outside helpers more likely to have given up on both of them.

Can the cycle be broken?

8. Can the cycle be broken?

There are three ways the cycle of violence can be broken:

1. THEY LEARN TO LIVE WITHOUT VIOLENCE.

   This is rare. It happens if they are lucky enough to find the right kind of help, if there is enough attraction and motivation left between them, if he does not believe he can get away with more violence.

2. SHE LEAVES.

   This will happen if she comes to believe they can never break the cycle of violence, if she is more terrified of staying than of leaving, and if she finds sufficient outside support so she can make it on her own.

3. ONE OF THEM DIES.

By the time a violent relationship becomes public, the situation may seem so extreme that we cannot identify with it. Yet the couple started out, like most couples, as two people who hoped they could find happiness by being together.

As community people, we can help them break the cycle of violence. Section Three of this Handbook suggests some ways. But before we can help them, our starting point is understanding that, even though their behavior becomes extreme, their needs and desires are the same as ours.

B. A DEFINITION

In this handbook, we use the terms "family violence" and "abusive relationships" interchangeably. Often violent or abusive behavior is called "battering," which is defined as ***"assaultive behavior between adults in an intimate, sexual, usually co-habiting relationship."***

Assaultive behavior can take many forms, including but not limited to:

Physical abuse: pushing, shoving, slapping, punching, kicking, breaking bones, locking out of one's home, abandoning in an unsafe place, murder.

Emotional and psychological abuse: putdowns; constant criticism; breaking down one's belief system (cultural or religious); threats to hurt or kill children or pets; making partner watch children being abused and not allowing partner to intervene; destruction of property and pets; jealousy; denying the partner the opportunity to keep friends, social contacts, outside interests; controlling partner's talk; making partner account for every minute, every action; controlling with fear.

Sexual abuse: forced unwanted sex; demanding that partner wear more/less provocative clothing; forced sex with objects, friends, animals; insisting that partner act out pornographic fantasies; denial of partner's sexuality.

Economic abuse: allowing partner no money of her own or no opportunity to improve her earning capacity; forcing partner to hand over every penny, whether or not she works/earns own money; forcing partner to account for every cent.

C. SOME FACTS AND FIGURES

Are abused wives rare? Unfortunately, no.

In May, 1982, the Canadian House of Commons officially adopted that:

> **1 out of 10 Canadian women** are battered by their husbands.[1]

Statistics Canada (1981) indicate there are 550,000 Alberta women legally married or living with a male partner. This means:

> There are potentially **55,000 abused women in Alberta.**

Alberta Social Services and Community Health reports that in 1984, approximately 3,235 women and 4,415 children were housed in Alberta's thirteen women's emergency shelters.

It is estimated that 1.1% of men are assaulted by their spouse.[2]

If national statistics are applied to Alberta on the basis of population, this means:

> There are potentially **5,775 abused husbands in Alberta.**

[1]The House of Commons accepted the estimate given in **Wife Battering in Canada: The Vicious Circle**, *prepared in 1980 by Linda MacLeod for the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women. Other researchers generally regard this as a low estimate.*

[2]Estimates in Dobash and Dobash: **Violence Against Wives**, *1979.*

A number of studies on family violence have reported that when women resort to violence against their spouses, most do so as an act of desperation after years of being beaten. Long-term physical abuse between spouses is almost always perpetrated by the man.

Wife assault is a fact of life in families across Canada. Women are kicked, punched, beaten, burned, threatened, knifed and shot, not by strangers, but by the men they live with. In every neighborhood there are women beaten by their husbands or live-in lovers.

Some other facts:[3]

- **Wife assault is as common in rural households as in cities.**
  Unfortunately for rural women, it is much more difficult to escape the situation because there may be no place for a rural woman to go, or no way to get there.
- **Wife assault is as common in high income as in low income families.**
  However, low income women are more likely to use facilities such as women's shelters; middle and upper income women are less likely to admit they are battered, and more likely to use resources other than shelters.
- **Wife assault spans all ages, races and nationalities.**
- **Wife assault is rarely a one-time occurrence.** Each assault reduces the assaulter's internal control, and makes it more likely that another incident will occur. Thus, the more it happens, the more likely it is to happen again.
- **Beatings are frequently severe.** In about one-third of cases, medical treatment is required. Injuries include bruises, lacerations, fractures, dislocations, burns, scalds. Women have been attacked with fists, boots, broken bottles, knives, razors, belts with buckles.
- **Wife assaults do become homicides.** Of 107 reported murders in immediate families in Canada in 1975, the wife was killed by the husband in 49 cases, but the husband was killed by the wife in only 8. Of all homicide victims in Canada between 1961 and 1974, 60% of all female victims were killed within a family context, more than double the proportion of male victims.
- **Wife assaults happen after hours.** 70% of wife battering occurs between 5:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m. About half the incidents occur on weekends.
- **Most wife assaults happen in private places,** away from the eyes of neighbors, friends and any potential help for the victim. Most cases occur in the family home, the kitchen and master bedroom being the most dangerous rooms. When domestic disputes occur outside the home, they usually take place where help is non-existent, for example in a car.
- **Wife assaults often occur during pregnancy.** The first violent incident often occurs during pregnancy. Several researchers identify pregnancy as the factor which most often triggers violence.

D. A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Wife abuse is not new. It is centuries-old.

- In 2500 B.C. if a wife talked back to her husband, he could engrave her name on a brick and use the brick to hit her.
- Wife beating and wife killing were rights of Greek and Roman men.
- In the middle ages, church and state accepted that a wife was the property of her husband. Wives could be bought and sold, and they could be burned at the stake for scolding, nagging or talking back to their husbands.
- In the eighteenth century, it was ruled that a husband could not beat his wife with a stick thicker than the width of his thumb.
- In the nineteenth century, a judge stated, "If no permanent injury has been inflicted ... by the husband, it is better to draw the curtain, shut out the public gaze, and leave the parties to forget and forgive." Even in the twentieth century, the judge's instruction to "draw the curtain" has been followed by those in a position to help.

But attitudes are changing: and changed attitudes are reflected in our laws:

- In Canada, in 1968, for the first time, a spouse could be granted a divorce on the grounds of physical cruelty.
- In Canada, as of 1983, a husband could be charged with raping his wife.
- In recent years, Canadian police forces are more likely to lay assault charges against a person who physically attacks his spouse.

In the past few decades, Canadians — including Albertans — have expressed increasing concern about abuse between spouses. Alberta was the first

[3]*Information taken from Linda MacLeod:* **Wife Battering in Canada: The Vicious Circle,** *1980.*

province to have a women's emergency shelter — developed by volunteers — and there are now numerous community groups working in various ways to reduce family violence in Alberta. In May, 1985, a motion addressing the problem of family violence was debated in the Alberta legislature.

These expressions of concern are encouraging. It means our society and our province will no longer accept the abuse of one spouse by another. As a M.L.A. said in the Alberta legislature, "No civilized society can allow some of its members to beat other weaker members without consequences."

E. WHAT KIND OF PERSON GETS INTO A VIOLENT RELATIONSHIP?

Facts and figures tell us part of the story, but to help those in violent relationships, it's also useful to understand the people we want to help.

Those who work with abusing partners say abusers tend to have characteristics in common; there is an "abusive personality." In contrast, partners who are abused do not start out with similar characteristics. However, being abused over a prolonged time tends to result in common behavior patterns which are developed as a way to cope with the abuse.[4]

Looking at characteristics of people in violent relationships helps us see how, over time, they become increasingly dependent on each other, and how difficult it is for them to break out of their destructive pattern as depicted in the diagram on the next page.

In a sad way, the abuser and the abused partner become well-suited to one another, tied together in their violent relationship:

- They probably both have low self-esteem; down deep they may not believe they deserve better;
- They are both dependent on one another;
- His explosive temper would only be accepted by someone as loyal and compliant as she has become; they both make excuses for him;
- His willingness to blame complements her willingness to accept guilt;
- She wants the violence to stop, but the relationship to continue. He also wants the relationship to continue, and will only curtail the violence if he has enough fear of losing the relationship.

Their patterns of relating are not so different from many traditional relationships. They have merely pushed the pattern to its extreme.

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[4]Research into "traumatic bonding" is useful in helping to understand how an abused person — even one who started out self-confident — can become dependent on and loyal to the abuser.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ASSAULTING PARTNER
(before and during relationship):

- May be from any social or economic level; any educational, racial, national, or age group.
- Probably experienced violence as a child.
- Most likely to be a man.
- LOW SELF-ESTEEM.
  Does not feel he achieves ideals and goals for self; feels he's a failure, even if successful by others' standards.
- EMOTIONAL DEPENDENCY.
  Needs mate for emotional support. Subject to secret depressions known only to family. Often impulsive; explosive temper.
- BLAMES OTHERS.
  Does not accept responsibility for his anger or his actions. Commonly blames victim. Often uses "the devil made me do it" rationale: "If I hadn't been drinking ..." Feels no guilt.
- LACKS EMPATHY.
  Expects others to understand his reasons for violent behavior, but cannot understand victim's feelings or perceptions of the situation.
- POSSESSIVE AND JEALOUS.
  Believes wife is his property. Jealous; expresses great fear of being abandoned or "cheated on." Containment, control of mate. May use espionage tactics against her (e.g. checks mileage, times errands).
- BELIEVES IT'S FOR THE FAMILY.
  Believes that forcible behavior will make the family secure; keep wife and children together and in line.
- ISOLATED.
  Describes relationship with mate as closest he's ever known. Probably stays in contact with his own family.
- MAKES PROMISES.
  Suggests great potential for change and improvement.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ASSAULTED PARTNER
(after prolonged abuse):

- May be from any social or economic level; any educational, racial, national, or age group.
- Did not necessarily experience violence as a child.
- Most likely to be a woman.
- LOW SELF-ESTEEM.
  May no longer believe she is worthwhile or loveable. Continued faith and hope that husband will get his "lucky" break.
- EMOTIONAL DEPENDENCY.
  Stops taking care of self and focusses on mate and children. Often subject to depression. High risk for secret drugs and alcohol.
- BLAMES SELF.
  Accepts blame and responsibility for violent encounter. May believe she "causes" assault. Thinks mate can't help it. Her willingness to accept guilt reduces assaulter's need to accept responsibility for his actions.

  LOYALTY.
  Stands by abuser and often defends his actions. Makes excuses for him. Wants violence to end but relationship to continue.
- COMPLIANT.
  Tries to pacify, please, obey, as the major way to survive. Unable to convince partner of loyalty. Allows containment or confinement by mate. May interpret jealousy as sign that mate "cares."
- BELIEVES IT'S FOR THE FAMILY.
  Believes short-term acceptance of violent behavior will lead to long-term resolution of family problems.
- ISOLATED.
  Gradually cut off from friends, outsiders. Often loses contact with her own family.
- BELIEVES PROMISES.
  Unrealistic hope that change will happen soon.

F. THE CYCLE OF VIOLENCE

Battering behavior usually follows a definite cycle.[5] Understanding this cycle is important in learning to help those in abusive relationships. The cycle of violence helps explain why she stays.

Phase One **TENSION BUILDING STAGE**

He attacks her verbally with insults, put-downs, accusations. Minor battering incidents occur. She tries to calm him, trying to anticipate his every whim. As tension builds, she becomes more passive, he becomes more oppressive. She blames herself for not being able to control the situation; she feels helpless. Tension becomes unbearable.

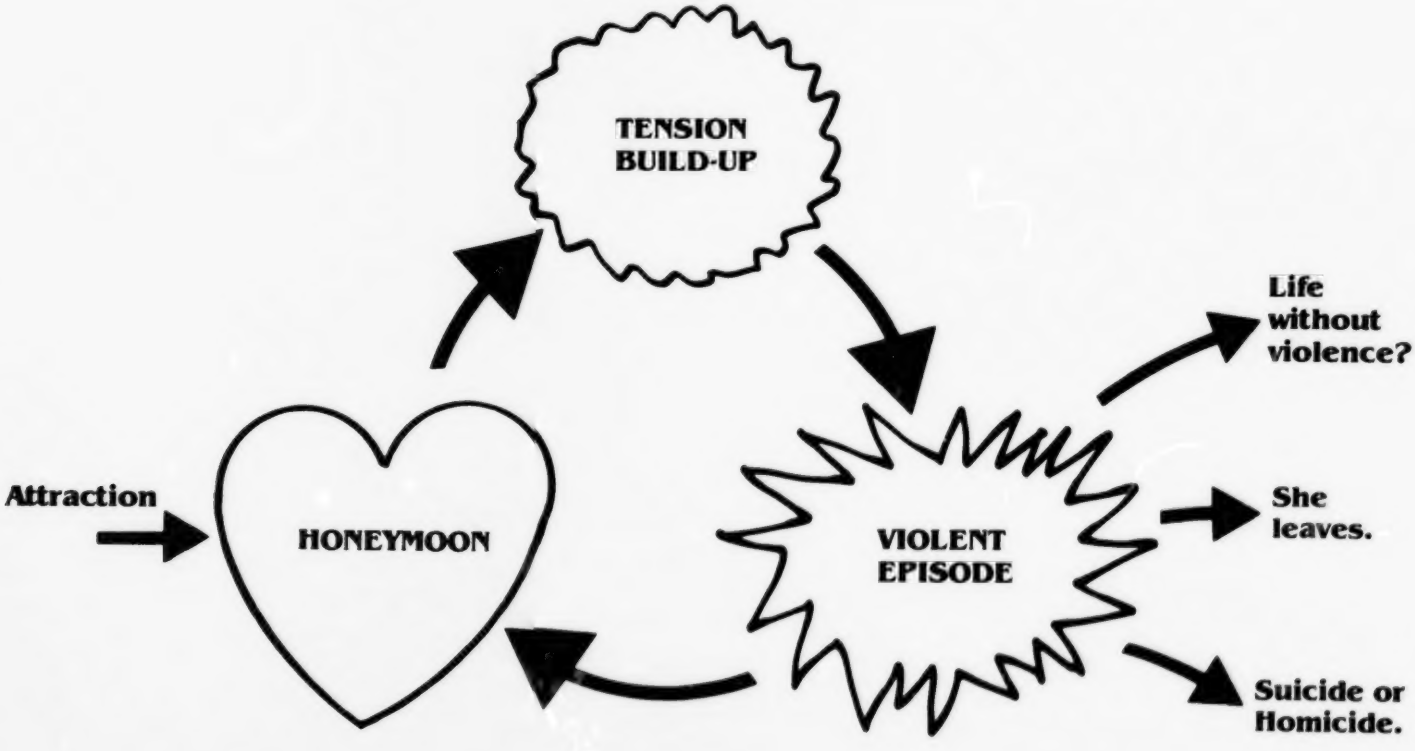
Phase Two **ACUTE BATTERING INCIDENT**

Tensions that built up in Phase One erupt into violence. The incident is usually triggered by an external event or internal state of the man, rather than by the woman's behavior. It is during this stage that the woman is most likely to be sexually assaulted, injured or killed.

Phase Three **HONEYMOON STAGE**

After the acute battering incident, the man becomes extremely loving, kind and contrite. He begs forgiveness and promises it will never happen again. As their relationship deteriorates, his loving behavior is increasingly important to her. For a time, he seems like the man she fell in love with. Guilt also holds her. They both believe she is responsible for his future welfare, or, if she leaves, for breaking up the home. If she stays, it is not long before the loving behavior gives way to small battering incidents. A NEW CYCLE OF VIOLENCE BEGINS.

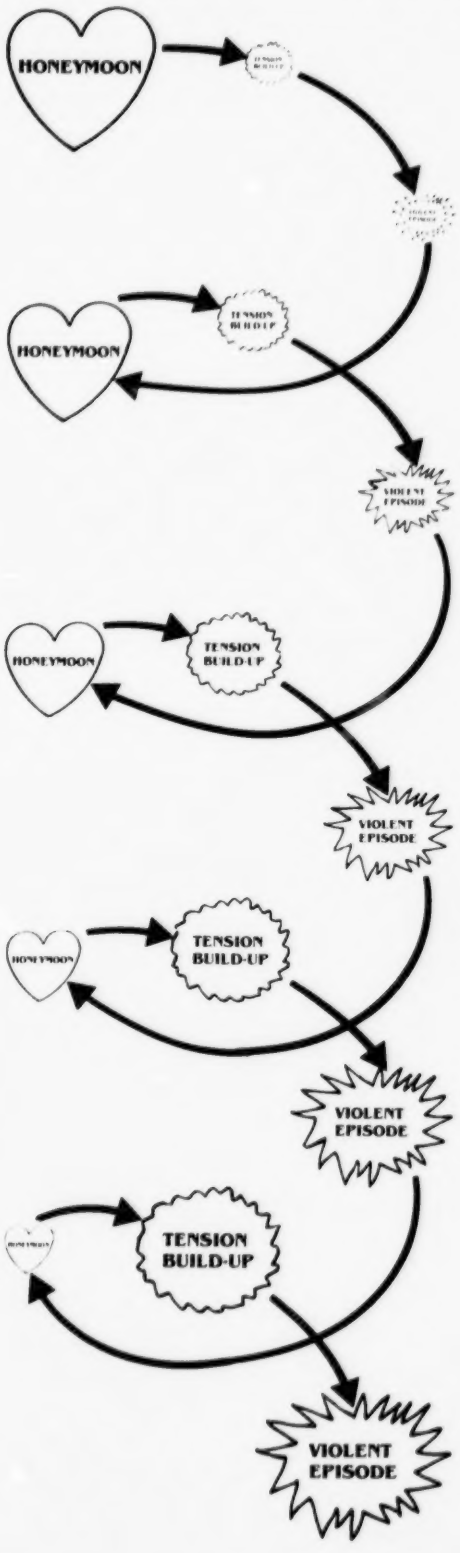
THE CYCLE OF VIOLENCE



[5]*Lenore Walker:* **The Battered Woman,** *1979.*

Over time, the cycle of violence shifts. Honeymoon periods become shorter; tension and violence increase. Some who work with those in abusive relationships say "indifference" sometimes becomes a phase of the cycle.

THE CYCLE OF VIOLENCE OVER TIME



Frances Woods[6] has identified stages a battered woman goes through, as she lives within the cycle of violence over a period of time. She may need different kinds of help at different stages:

STAGES IN THE BATTERED WOMAN'S EXPERIENCE

Stage One **DENIAL**

An abused woman's most common response to early battering incidents is to deny there is a problem. Denial is a common human response to any traumatic experience. She may simply not be able to believe the incident happened.

If she grew up with violence, a woman may downplay the incident ("He only shoved me") or may believe that violence is normal. If she did not grow up with violence, her image of "a battered woman" may be someone poorly-educated or low income, and she does not want to perceive herself in that way. She is ashamed and does not want anyone to know.

The couple probably does not discuss the incidents for fear that talking might trigger more incidents.

Stage Two **BLAMING HERSELF**

Guilt and turmoil characterize the woman's feelings as she begins to recognize that she is battered. Three factors contribute to her blaming herself:

- Low self-esteem: even if she started with a high level of self-confidence, being abused makes her doubt her worth. She begins to believe that she deserves the abuse.
- Others blame her: her husband is likely to blame her ("if you'd keep the kids out of the toolbox, I would not have to get mad"), and she accepts responsibility for his actions. Widespread public opinion that "she must have asked for it," and that women are responsible for what happens in a family reinforce that she is to blame.
- She needs to feel some power: as the situation deteriorates and she feels increasingly powerless, she can get some sense of controlling the situation if she believes she causes it. The logic goes: "I must provoke him to hit me. If it's me that makes him do it, I could stop provoking him and then he would stop hitting me. I'll try harder."

[6]*Frances B. Woods:* **Living Without Violence**, *1981.*

Stage Three **SEEKING HELP**

Reaching for help is often a negative experience.

Friends and family may disbelieve her, or may tell her she is to blame, or that "You made your bed, lie in it."

Women may find that police, lawyers, and the legal system are guided by rules set up to protect the civil rights of the assaulter more than the victim.

Rural women may find services do not exist. Even a woman who has access to services may not find doctors, counsellors or other helpers with in-depth understanding of her situation. The common belief that violence in the home is a family affair may mean potential helpers do not feel they should intervene. Societal values of keeping the family together at all cost may convince her to return.

She is in a no-win situation. If she leaves, "She didn't try." If she stays, "She must like it."

If a woman reaches out for help and finds none, she may be driven back to the violent relationship.

Stage Four **GOING IN AND OUT OF THE RELATIONSHIP (AMBIVALENCE)**

Those who work with assaulted women say 80% to 90% of women leave and return to the relationship more than once. This ambivalent stage causes misunderstanding, hostility, and frustration towards the assaulted woman, and may lead potential helpers to give up on her.

During the ambivalent stage, the woman is trying to decide whether to leave or stay in the relationship. She must go back and forth to help her decide.

She may try counselling to salvage the relationship. However, few assaulting mates will attend counselling, and even if they go, counselling alone seldom stops assaulters from hitting. Counselling in combination with external control (e.g. a restraining order) has sometimes made a difference.

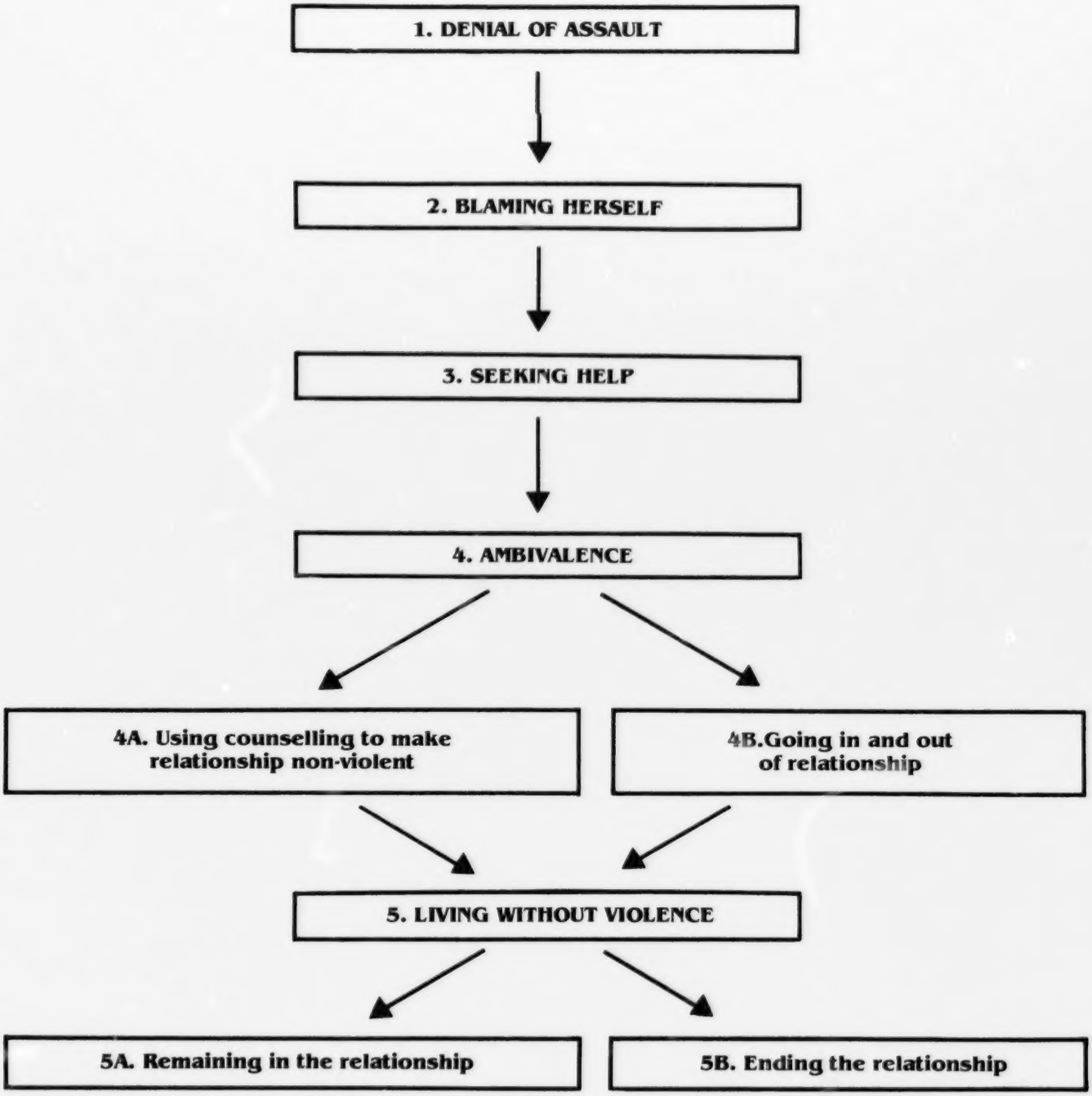
Why does she leave? She believes her life is in danger. She fears for her children. She has some hope of supporting herself in the outside world. She has mustered enough self-confidence to believe she can have a satisfying life on her own. When she leaves, she tests if she can survive in the outside environment.

Why does she go back? She wants the relationship (she still loves him). She believes his promises or his threats. She feels guilty about breaking up the family. She feels worthless and fears she can't make it on her own. When she goes back, she tests if the relationship can be changed. She needs to be sure she's given it every chance. Though nearly all assaulted women go through the pattern of ambivalence, each does so in her own way. She may leave and return few or many times; she may come to a resolution gradually or suddenly. The ambivalent stage may last for years.

Stage Five **LIVING WITHOUT VIOLENCE**

Whether she stays or leaves, the woman will probably need on-going support. Fear, low self-esteem and flash-backs of the violence may plague her. Some say it takes five years to recover from a violent relationship. Some say it takes forever.

SUMMARY OF THE STAGES IN A BATTERED WOMAN'S EXPERIENCE


1. DENIAL OF ASSAULT
2. BLAMING HERSELF
3. SEEKING HELP
4. AMBIVALENCE
4A. Using counselling to make relationship non-violent
4B.Going in and out of relationship
5. LIVING WITHOUT VIOLENCE
5A. Remaining in the relationship
5B. Ending the relationship

G. MYTHS AND REALITIES

MYTH: BATTERING IS A PRIVATE MATTER. NO ONE SHOULD DISRUPT FAMILY SANCTITY.

REALITY: Families should be protected from the invasion of their privacy except when the interests of individual family members and/or the community are jeopardized. The interests of family members and the community are jeopardized when individuals suffer from the threat or reality of family violence.

Battering is assault and assault is a crime, whether it occurs within or outside of the home. The belief that family violence is "private" stigmatizes those caught in violent relationships, makes others reluctant to intervene, and thus perpetuates the problem.

MYTH: WIFE ASSAULT IS RARE, OR WE'D HEAR MORE ABOUT IT.

REALITY: One in ten women, and about one in a hundred men, are abused by their married or common law partners. In Alberta that means about 55,000 women, and about 5,500 men are potential victims of assault in their own homes.

We don't hear about abusive relationships because both partners hide the facts from others. Their secrecy is made easier because communities find it difficult to believe abuse occurs. Societal values may accept violence in men — especially when directed against wives — so violent incidents are not recognized as assault.

MYTH: WOMEN "ASK FOR IT." THEY DRIVE MEN TO VIOLENCE.

REALITY: Stress and conflict are part of any relationship. Violence is never an appropriate way to solve a problem. No one deserves to be beaten.

In the early stages of a violent relationship, abused women try hard to be and do whatever their husbands want of them, partly in hopes of avoiding the violence. In later stages, as a survival technique, some women may provoke fights, to get the violence over with and reduce the tension.

MYTH: ASSAULTED WOMEN LIKE IT, OR THEY WOULDN'T STAY.

REALITY: Women stay for varied and complex reasons. They hope to change the man they love, believe the honeymoon promises, feel guilt for breaking up a family, fear his threats, do not have the social or economic resources to make it on their own, and/or have no place to go.

MYTH: THERE'S NO POINT IN HELPING BATTERED WOMEN. THEY'LL JUST GO BACK.

REALITY: During the ambivalent stage, battered women are trying to decide whether to go or stay. Forces pulling them away are as strong as forces pulling toward the relationship. They leave to test if they can survive outside the relationship, and return to test if the relationship can change. While frustrating to outsiders, this stage enables women to finally resolve their situation.

MYTH: ABUSERS ARE VIOLENT IN ALL THEIR RELATIONSHIPS.

REALITY: Men who believe wives are their property and must be controlled do not have the same belief about other people, so are not necessarily violent toward others. Sometimes outsiders cannot believe the abuse occurs, because the abuser seems quiet and controlled outside his home.

MYTH: THE BATTERER IS NOT A LOVING PARTNER.

REALITY: The same impulsiveness that leads batterers to violence carries into the honeymoon stage, when the batterer may be passionately loving and affectionate. Such loving behavior often keeps the battered partner in the relationship.

MYTH: DRINKING CAUSES ABUSIVE BEHAVIOR.

REALITY: Though drinking and battering are often associated, one does not cause the other. The batterer has qualities (low self-esteem, poor impulse control) which are contributing factors to both drinking and violence.

MYTH: GIVING THE BATTERERS "A TASTE OF THEIR OWN MEDICINE" WILL STOP THE VIOLENCE.

REALITY: Using violence to stop violence is a contradiction, and it doesn't work. Violence generates more violence. However, several pilot projects in Canada and the U.S. indicate that arresting and prosecuting batterers *does* reduce repeat offenses. Abusers need to know their behavior will not be accepted.

MYTH: NOBODY CAN HELP PEOPLE IN A VIOLENT RELATIONSHIP.

REALITY: Across Alberta, people have broken the cycle of violence in their lives. Most had help from others. Helping those in violent relationships is not easy, but it is possible.

IN SUMMARY: WHY FAMILY VIOLENCE HAPPENS

FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO WIFE ASSAULT:

1. THE PARTNERS' CHARACTERISTICS HOLD THEM TOGETHER:
   As abused partners adapt and become more compliant, as a way to cope with being abused, the partners' characteristics make them increasingly dependent on one another.
   - Characteristics in common: both may have low self-esteem; both believe they are acting in the best interest of the family; both believe they cannot survive without each other.
   - Complementary characteristics (after prolonged abuse): aggressive/passive; demanding/compliant; blaming/accepting guilt.

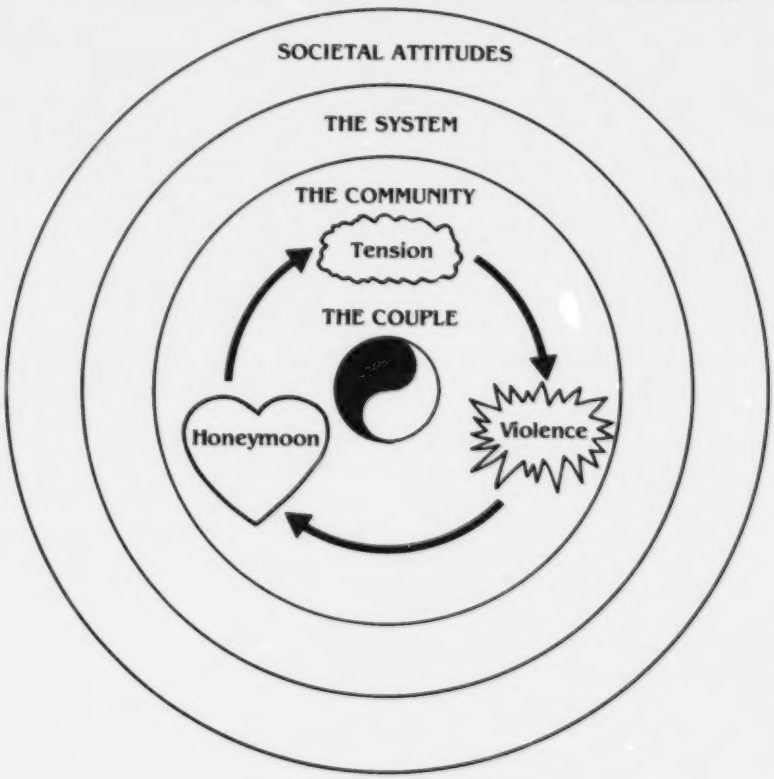
2. THE CYCLE OF VIOLENCE:
   - Eventually, the couple's only tenderness and affection happens during a honeymoon stage — after a beating. The absence of other closeness in their lives makes them increasingly dependent on the honeymoon.
   - Isolation: the worse their relationship gets, the more they are cut off from others, and the more they are dependent on each other.

3. THE COMMUNITY:
   - Probably feels helpless to do anything.
   - Does not want to know the problem exists; helps keep the violence secret.
   - May stigmatize family (gossip, blame, withdrawing from them) which increases couple's dependence on one another.

4. THE SYSTEM (SERVICES, AGENCIES, POLICIES)
   - Few helping professionals have in-depth understanding of the problem.
   - Legal system set up to protect civil rights of assaulter more than victim.
   - Services may not exist, be accessible, or offer appropriate help.
   - The labyrinth of medical, legal and social services may be unco-ordinated or work at cross purposes with one another.
   - Others assume the system can handle the problem, so do not get involved.

5. SOCIETY'S VALUES AND ATTITUDES:
   - Belief in the privacy and sanctity of the family prevents the couple from seeking help, and stops others from intervening.
   - The couple may accept the common societal belief in keeping the family together at all costs; others may reinforce this.
   - Men's dominance over women is a centuries-old tradition, so a husband's violence against his wife may be condoned, rather than considered assault.
   - Attitudes that accept or glorify violence desensitize us to the reality of abuse in the home.

FAMILY VIOLENCE DOES NOT HAPPEN IN A VACUUM.



BREAKING THE PATTERN

How Alberta Communities Can Help Assaulted Women And Their Families

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SO WHAT'S NEEDED?

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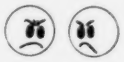
A. THE BLAME GAME

One of the central themes in the cycle of violence is BLAME.

- The abuser BLAMES his wife for provoking him to violence. Or he blames "trouble at work" or "too much to drink" or whatever.

- The abused person BLAMES herself. She feels responsible for the actions of the abuser and thinks, "I should have known better."



- They are both filled with BLAME.

Ironically, BLAME is also one of the recurring themes of people trying to help:

- We BLAME the abuser for his violent behavior.

- We BLAME the assaulted person for allowing herself to be victimized.

- We BLAME helping professionals for not having more understanding.

- We BLAME communities and governments for not doing more.

- We BLAME society for attitudes that allow family violence.

- We may do as much BLAMING as people in the cycle of violence!

BLAME is usually a secondary feeling.

Before we started BLAMING each other, we probably felt HELPLESS and POWERLESS to stop the violent situation. Then we turned our helpless-/powerless feelings into BLAMING, as shown in the diagram.

Nobody likes to feel helpless and powerless. Not abused women. Not abusers. Not professional helpers. Not community people. If we can find someone or something to blame, then we don't feel so helpless. Blaming gives us a small feeling of power. It also helps us avoid responsibility.

As this handbook was being developed, we heard some BLAMING. We also heard people who felt HELPLESS and POWERLESS.

We thought, if we could talk to one another about how we **really** felt (underneath the blaming), we might find we have many of the same feelings. It would be harder to blame each other if we understood each other better.

And if we understood, maybe we would find ways to HELP one another. The assaulter, the assaulted, and the helpers could stop feeling helpless and powerless, and could get on with making some changes.

And so to THE BOOK OF LETTERS ...

What we might say if we could **really** talk to each other ...

> NOTE: By now you might be wondering, "When do I get to **do** something?" Well, the Book of Letters will probably give you a feel for what might need to be done, and the pages after the Book of Letters will give you more ideas about what can be done in a community. Section III tells how a community might go about the task.

B. THE BOOK OF LETTERS

What would we say if we could really talk to one another? The letters which follow are composites of what real people told us as the handbook was being developed.

LETTER FROM AN ABUSED WOMAN

I could not have written this letter ten years ago. I was in the middle of a battering situation, and I didn't even know what I thought or felt any more, let alone be able to write something down.

I lived in it for 12 years. People wonder why I stayed. It's taken me a long time to figure out the reasons. Partly it was because just about the time I'd think, "One more time and that's it, I'm leaving," then he'd be nice. He knew just how far he could push. I wanted our marriage to work out, so when he was nice, I'd think maybe this time it would last.

He could be so loving sometimes and so cruel other times. The loving times made me want to stay, and the cruel times ground me down so much I couldn't leave anyway. It took me a long time to admit to myself that I couldn't make him love me enough to quit hitting me.

After you've been beaten, humiliated, put down, shamed and in absolute terror for years, you're not a person any more, you're a zombie. It's like I died. I didn't even cry any more.

My doctor said, "You don't have any places left to bruise. How much longer are you going to put up with this?" But I didn't want to deprive my children of their father. And after all, I was his wife. I made a lifetime commitment.

Besides, where would I go? When I got married, I'd had a job and believe it or not I had quite a bit of self-confidence. But after twelve years of abuse I had no money, no friends, no place to stay. My family wrote me off a long time ago. He kept telling me I was worthless, and I believed him. How could a worthless person like me handle moving, find new schools and a place to live, and raise kids alone? There was no way I could find a job and support three kids. If only I hadn't let myself become so dependent.

The night I left he had a rifle and was shooting up the house. I was terrified he would murder the children. I grabbed the kids in their pajamas and ran into the street. The neighbor's garage was unlocked and we ran in there. The neighbors called the police but I was terrified he'd find us and kill us and the neighbors before the police got there. I felt terrible about putting the neighbors in danger, and humiliated that they had to see us like that.

We stayed that night at the neighbors', but I was terrified the police would let him go and he'd find us. The neighbors helped smuggle the kids and I to an apartment in a different town, and they helped me get on social assistance. All the time I lived there, I was in terror that he'd find us or kidnap the kids after school. I had a restraining order put on him, but the police can't guard someone 24 hours a day.

It sounds funny, but I worried about him, all alone in the house without the kids and me to keep him company. And I felt so guilty about leaving him. I don't believe in breaking up a family. I felt like such a failure as a wife. I'd think about the good times and wonder if I should go back and try it again. Then I'd remember the night we left and know that I could never go back.

The kids were quite a handful. They'd been through a lot and had a hard time adjusting to the new school and the new town. And I was so strung out. I'd be screaming at them one minute and hugging them the next. It was a rough time for all of us.

The best thing that happened to me was meeting another woman who had been through the same thing. I found out I wasn't crazy and I wasn't worthless and I wasn't the only one. She introduced me to a few other people, and gradually I started getting myself put back together. I wish I had met someone like her ten years earlier.

I've been on my own for six years now. I have a job and the kids are pretty well settled down. Sometimes I still have nightmares, but mostly I'm doing okay. I'm even starting to like myself. I'm becoming a human being again, instead of a zombie, and it's kind of nice.

LETTER FROM AN ABUSING HUSBAND

When I was a kid, the man was the head of the household. My father made us stay in line and if we stepped out of line, he knocked us back in. It was good for us. We grew up to respect authority.

When I got married, I figured my job was to be the head of the household. That's the way my wife wanted it too. Now she says we should go for counselling to talk about our problems. I told her she can go for counselling if she has a problem. Why should I go talk to somebody? I don't have a problem.

I don't understand why people don't respect authority any more. It used to be the boss was the boss, but people don't respect the boss any more. At work they tell me I have to change. I'm supposed to "consult" the people that work under me. They don't think they should have to take orders. But how am I going to get any work out of them if I don't give orders? I'm doing it the only way I know how.

I've worked hard all my life and where did it get me? Nowhere, that's where. I always wanted to be someone, but I've always felt like a failure, like I never measured up to what my father would have wanted. The other day, my uncle said, "You've done alright for yourself," but he was wrong. I haven't done anything.

I guess that's why I get so mad when my wife or the kids act up. If a man can't control his own family, he's nothing. If my wife and kids would just smarten up, I wouldn't have to get mad.

I've always had a bad temper, even when I was a boy. Something snaps inside and I just go wild. Sometimes I guess I get carried away a little. Then afterwards I'm sorry. I don't mean to hurt anyone. Once my wife said if I didn't know what I was doing, how come I only hit her where the bruises wouldn't show. She got a bruise that showed, and she never said that again. My wife knows I have a temper. She should stay out of my way, and then she wouldn't get hurt.

My wife says she wants to leave. What kind of talk is that? Women didn't talk like that when I was a kid. In those days, women respected their husbands. I'm a good provider. I built her a nice house, what more does she want? Maybe she **should** go for counselling, if it would straighten her out.

Sometimes she almost acts like she's afraid of me. I don't know why. Doesn't she know I love her? She's the only person I've ever been close to. I don't know what I would do without her.

She wouldn't dare leave. I'd track her down and I'd find her, and she'd be sorry she ever tried to get away. She knows it, too. She knows who's boss.

LETTER FROM THE 17-YEAR-OLD SON OF AN ABUSIVE COUPLE

My parents have been fighting ever since I can remember. They used to have some happy times, but then the fighting would always start again. When I was a kid, I used to wish the happy times would last, but they never did. After a while I couldn't decide which was worse, the fights or the so-called good times. I wanted to throw up when they were nice to each other. How could she kiss him when he'd been bashing her the day before?

I hate my father. He is the most vicious person I've ever met. I'm finally taller and stronger than he is, and I'm not afraid of him any more. All the time I was growing up, I lived for the day I would be meaner and tougher than he was. I figured maybe I could be the one to stop him from pushing my mother around. The day came, all right. One day when he was winding up to hit her, I stepped in and decked him one. Do you know what she did? She jumped in between us and said, "Don't hurt your father."

I have nothing but contempt for my mother. I can't stand her weakness. For twenty years, she has stood by and let him get away with murder. The worst time was when he beat her so bad she ended up in hospital. The police wanted her to lay charges. She did, but the next day she dropped them. She went back to him.

My father hates all of us, but he still tries to control us. No matter what we do, we can never please him. What really bugs me is that even though I hate him, I still keep trying to make him proud of me. I want to punch his face in, and I want him to be proud of me. It doesn't make any sense.

I'm never going to get married. If my father is vicious, and my mother is weak, what does that make me? I've got to be pretty rotten if I came from them. I went to a doctor's office to see if I could get a vasectomy. I figure anyone with my genes shouldn't ever have kids. I'd probably beat them. But the doctor wouldn't do it. He said I was too young to make that decision.

My sister got out when she was 16. She married a guy seven years older than her, just to get away. I'm living for the day when I can get away too. And once I leave, I'm never coming back. Let my father kill my mother. She's been waiting for it long enough. I plan to be so far away that I'll never even hear about it. Maybe I'll change my name so no one can find out what a rotten family I came from.

LETTER FROM A FRIEND

I'm really concerned about a couple we know.

When we first met them, they seemed nice enough. They were very traditional — he works and she stays home — and they made no bones about him being the dominant one. We made jokes about how he runs a tight ship — he gives her an allowance and checks the mileage on the car, and heaven help her or the kids if they misbehave. It's not how I'd want to live, but it's none of my business if they want to live that way. They're not so different from a lot of couples we know.

I realized there was more going on when she was over for coffee one day. She started to cry and tell me about a fight they'd had. Apparently they'd been at a barbecue and he thought she was flirting with some guy. When they got home, he accused her of cheating on him and during the argument he hit her. Now you have to know this woman to appreciate how ridiculous this is. She's so timid and mousy and fearful, she couldn't flirt if her life depended on it. The woman sat at my kitchen table and cried and said she didn't know what to do, and I didn't know what to say to her.

One night we got a call from one of their kids. The dad was on the rampage and the little girl was scared. My husband went over and physically separated the husband and wife, got them to calm down, and stayed until he thought it was safe for him to leave.

That's happened three times now, and I'm just sick about it. I'm glad my husband is keeping them from hurting each other too much, but I'm not keen about him going into the situation. He could get hurt.

I told him he should call the police, but he doesn't want to do that. It's a bit awkward. My husband works with this guy, they're in the same service club, and we see each other socially. My husband doesn't approve of what's going on, but he says, "How can you call the police on a friend?" The worst part is, the husband is really quite a nice guy most of the time.

I've told the woman she can come to our house any time, if she needs a place to be safe. I've talked to her about getting a part-time job or something, so she wouldn't be so dependent on her husband, but she says her husband doesn't want her to work and what job could she get anyway? She's not trained for anything.

It's an awful thing to say, but I think she should leave him. She won't, though, at least not for a long time. He's nice to her sometimes, and that makes her think things will change. And anyway, she's too down on herself to believe she could get along without him.

I wish I knew how to help her.

LETTER FROM A DOCTOR

I've heard people criticize doctors because we don't "do more" for battered women. Let me tell you how it is.

When a woman walks into my office — or arrives at the emergency entrance of the hospital — and I find out she's been injured by her husband, it makes me wish I was somewhere else.

You know why? Because I know that after we patch her up, she's going to go right back into the same situation. No matter what I say or do, women keep going back to men who abuse them. I can patch up their bodies, but sometimes it almost seems like a waste of time.

I've come to the conclusion that at some level these women must feel like they don't deserve any better. Their self-esteem is usually so low and their problems so deep-seated that I'm not sure any M.D. can help them. In a way, it almost seems like the husband and wife need each other.

If the husband has an alcohol problem and we can do something about that, sometimes we can get the situation turned around. But if he hits her when he's sober, I've never yet seen a case where we could get him to stop the violence. Her only way out is to leave, but she keeps going back.

At one time, people expected doctors to heal their bodies. In the last few years, it seems we're also supposed to heal people's lives. I wish I could. But I know of no prescription and no surgical procedure that can make people like themselves.

Please don't misunderstand me. It's not that I don't care. If I didn't care, it wouldn't bother me so much. I would help them if I could. The trouble is, I don't know how.

LETTER FROM A POLICEMAN

When we get the call about a domestic dispute, we think, "Here we go again." There's a good chance that no matter what we do, there's no way the situation is going to have a positive outcome.

We usually don't get all the information we'd like to have. The caller is usually someone who knows there's a lot of noise, but doesn't know exactly what's going on. So when we walk up to that door, we don't know if there is just shouting, or physical abuse, or if there are any children on the premises, or if there's a weapon. It would be nice to know if we're dealing with someone just released from prison or a mental hospital, or if there's a history of violence. But usually we don't know.

We have to answer the call anyway.

We go in twos. But it doesn't matter if you take two guys or ten guys, somebody has to go through that door. There isn't one of us that isn't a little scared. We all know the statistics about how many policemen get killed during domestic disputes.

We have to be prepared for the worst: a hostage-taking with a weapon. We have to get enough adrenalin going so we can handle that. But then if it turns out to be a minor incident, we might over-react. If we do, it's because we have enough adrenalin pumped up to handle a major crisis. The adrenalin doesn't go away just because the situation is minor.

When we get through the door, our job is to control the situation: to find out what's going on, and to make sure nobody gets hurt. We can count on people being mad because we're there. They didn't call us, and they don't want us to be there. Our job is to control the situation, but they don't want us to control it.

The first thing we do is separate the two people, get them into two different rooms, and let them sound off. And that's where we might run into trouble. Suppose a policeman had a fight with his wife that morning, and now he's listening to a husband complain. The policeman might start to identify a bit with the husband. Or maybe the husband turns out to be a friend of the policeman. Pretty embarrassing for both of them. Or maybe the policeman starts to feel a bit sorry for the wife. Well, as soon as you let any emotion affect you, you're in trouble. You let your guard down a bit, and you lose some control. That's when you might get killed.

Once we get things cooled out, we have to decide the next move. Once in a while, it's safe to leave them both there. But usually one of them has to leave. If there are children present, it would make sense if it was the man who left, so we wouldn't have to disrupt the kids, but we may not have enough legal grounds to put the guy in a cell overnight and we can't just tell him to leave because he might come back and attack her again. So usually the woman and the kids have to leave, and we take them someplace safe.

A lot of people don't understand what the police can and can't do, and what our authority is. We can only arrest the guy if we actually see him commit an indictable offense (like if we saw him hit her — which almost never happens), or if we have reasonable grounds to believe he **may** commit an

indictable offense (like if he says, "when the police leave, I'm going to hit you," which almost never happens). If we arrest him, we hold him in the cells until he cools off.

If we have enough evidence to prove he assaulted her, we can lay charges and issue a summons. More police forces are doing this nowadays. The wife can also lay charges, but our police force doesn't encourage this because a lot of times the wife will drop the charges and that leaves us with nothing to go on. It's better if the police press charges.

After the incident is over, sometimes we wonder "What for?" We stopped them from killing each other, for the moment, but he's mad at us and she's mad at us and they're probably going to get back together again anyway. And we're left with our adrenalin still pumping.

You know how sometimes when a kid is frustrated, he'll walk down the alley and kick every garbage can? Well, sometimes we almost feel like the police are the garbage can.

Other times, though, I think things are getting better. More police have training in how to handle domestic disputes, and there are more services to back us up. The courts are more likely to prosecute. In some cases, the police work with community groups trying to cut down the number of domestic disputes.

We're getting there.

LETTER FROM A SHELTER WORKER

We pick up the pieces. We see the pain on a daily basis. We know the implications of battering and we can't understand why others don't take it seriously. The implications are awesome. We know the dynamics of battering. We know the interventions that have worked in other places and we wonder why there is so much resistance here.

We see the fear of the women and children walking into the shelter, not knowing what to expect, often expecting the worst, feeling ashamed that it has come to this, that they need the help of a shelter. They're afraid they will be judged one more time, afraid someone will ask, "Why did you stay?" or "What did you do to cause the problem?"

We work with women whose self-esteem has been taken away for many years, through putdowns and name-calling and being told they're crazy. We talk to the children who have crawled into a closet.

We offer coffee. We get the kids comfortable. We start asking open-ended questions. We know they'll have trouble talking, and we reflect that back. Quite often it's the first time they've shared this deeply hidden secret. They learned when they shared in the past not to share anymore. We try to let them stay with their feelings, let them cry, let them stay with the pain. We know they may distance themselves from it in a few days. You see, part of living in a battering situation is to cut off all feeling. Then when they do start to share, it's hard.

We find out — we ask — what they need. Quite often it's safety. There are security measures, and they feel safe here. We see them become more comfortable when they realize they're safe, they will not be judged, and they're not the only one.

We try to give them back control as soon as possible. They've been controlled by battering so long. We explain what the shelter is about, what we can offer. We help them understand abuse — they've lived through it but they may not understand it — and we listen without judging. We give them information about their alternatives — legal, financial, housing, counselling. We help them look at their decisions — whether to return, whether to go independent, whether to leave the community. The decisions are theirs — their life, their decisions.

When they go back we know they have to. They have to be sure they've done all they can. If they have to come back to us again, it's hard for them. We try to let them know we'll understand — it's okay to come back.

Our centre has a child care worker and that takes some of the pressure off the mothers. The children are in transition. We have babies to teenagers, and they're usually confused when they arrive. Many children don't know what's happening. We've learned the children are usually afraid — afraid of what will happen to them, afraid of being in a strange place, afraid of what dad will do when he finds they're gone.

We've seen two-year-olds sobbing, trying to be quiet, because they're afraid someone will hit them if they cry; we've seen a ten-year-old girl with gonorrhea she got from her stepfather. The stories of physical abuse are hard, but sexual abuse is even harder to take because we know the ramifications, how hard it will be to work through. Very

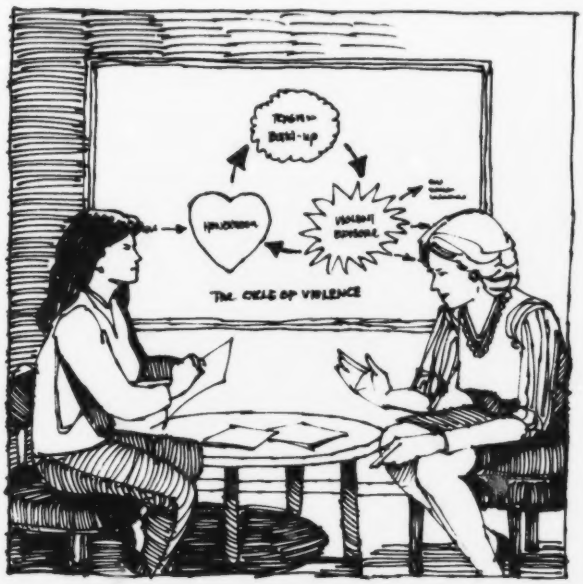
often the mother denies or doesn't know the children have been abused. Sometimes it's hard not to be angry at a society that doesn't protect children.

Children have been told they were hit because they were bad. Then they interpret Dad hitting Mom as "She's been bad and that's why Dad hit her." When they find out we don't hit children here they're usually surprised. Of course for the first few days they have to test it out. We have a lot of angry children here. They test their mother, too. Since she has usually not been the dominant one, they wonder if she can control things.

Many of our rewards come from the children. Once they accept the safety and security — maybe their first in a long time — we hope they will remember this place where nobody is hit, and it will help. It's hard to be sad on a day-to-day basis because of the children. There's always a hug or a mess or a mischief going on. The children help to keep the atmosphere normal and warm and humorous.

We hold public education events, and there are always people in the crowd ready to hate the man. But we know he learned it somewhere. We weren't there as a society when he needed to learn other ways. Adults may see the batterer as a brute, but his children don't. They want him to be a good daddy.

Our centre has a three-month follow-up for women, and a support group that goes for nine weeks, or ten, or fourteen ... I wish there were more support groups for women, but we also need treatment groups to help men change their behavior. Without that, we'll just keep patching up the women, but the problem won't go away.



LETTER FROM A COUNSELLOR

There was nothing in my formal training to help me work with abused or abusing persons. When I started as a well-trained but inexperienced counsellor, I had no inkling of how to recognize the signs of violence, or what treatment regimes would help in preventing another violent episode.

Despite my absence of background, abusive couples were referred to me. I searched the professional literature of the time and found almost nothing to help me be more effective in dealing with abuse.

My background and my biasses led me to deal with the total family system, rather than one individual, so I viewed abusive relationships as a "couple" problem and attempted to use couple counselling techniques that had worked well in other counselling situations. I now know this approach was not only ineffective, it may even have been dangerous as a technique for dealing with abuse.

More research is available now. An eminent therapist who works with abusers was asked, "Why do men beat their wives?" His answer: "Because they can."

The missing piece in my conventional "family systems" approach was the dynamics of power. Among other things, abusive relationships constitute an imbalance of power. Interestingly, it is often easier for abusers to acknowledge the battering than to acknowledge the abuse of power. But we've concluded that abusers will keep abusing as long as they can get away with it.

We understand more now about the abused partner. At one time we theorized that the personality of the abused person led her to be attracted to a potential abuser. We also took into account that many abused persons were subject to social pressures to keep the family intact, or had no money and therefore could not leave an abusive situation. But that did not explain why unmarried women stayed with abusive partners or why financially well-off women stayed. There had to be something else going on.

Then it was noticed that women who had suffered prolonged abuse from their partner had characteristics in common with victims of hijackings, kidnappings or rape. In certain circumstances, victims become "bonded" or develop a strong emotional attachment to their captor. I won't bore you with the theory of how intermittent reinforcement can be used to control behavior. Suffice it to say we are beginning to understand that the abused person's common characteristics — low self-esteem, loyalty, compliance, guilt, loss of identity, and so on — appear to be the **result**, rather than the cause, of prolonged abuse.

So where does that leave us as counsellors? Well, I'm still committed to the value of total family therapy — but **not** when abuse is present. Where there is abuse, we deal with the partners separately.

The abuser probably needs to be separated from his family — by legal means if necessary — to help him understand that neither the law nor his family will accept violence. He also must be separated from them so he cannot manipulate or intimidate other family members. He needs to under-

stand that he is responsible and accountable for his own behavior. This forced separation, combined with group therapy where he learns more acceptable ways to express anger, appear to be more effective than anything else we've tried.

The abused partner needs emotional support, such as self-help groups for those who have been abused, to help her understand she is not responsible for her partner's behavior, and to rebuild her self-image. She needs help if she is to maintain the strength and resolve not to accept more violence, and not to be intimidated by other strategies to hook her guilt, fear or unrealistic optimism.

The children often do not need counselling so much as someone to help them express their feelings. Play therapy and other techniques are useful in this regard. Children may need help to understand they neither cause nor deserve the violence. They may need help to learn non-violent methods of behavior for themselves. And they need some plain old-fashioned stability, affection and kindness.

LETTER FROM A LAWYER

I look at family violence from two perspectives, professional and personal.

From a professional perspective, I find it difficult to deal with the issues surrounding family violence. The legal system often does not treat wife battering as the serious issue it is. When a husband assaults his wife, the attitude is sometimes, "Oh, Dick and Jane are at it again." In theory, there are mechanisms to protect the wife — restraining orders and court sentences. But often the judge seems to feel that appearing in court is enough deterrent to a violent husband, and so wrist-slapping is all that happens. The woman is humiliated — and still in danger of being beaten again. If the same man assaulted a stranger, he'd go to jail. I wish the legal system would take wife assault seriously.

From a personal perspective, I've almost outgrown being angry and judgmental. I don't ask any more why the woman is leaving — or not leaving. I give legal advice, but the client makes the decisions. I've learned to let the client come and go as often as necessary. If it's fifteen times, I'll be there. I just wish women could maintain the self-esteem they were born with. They have to believe they don't deserve abuse before they will allow themselves to do anything about it.

I'm a specialist in matrimonial law, and I prefer this type of practice. A lot of lawyers don't, because the emotion bothers them. If you're gong to be a committed matrimonial lawyer, you have to take a holistic approach and not worry about who's going to get the refrigerator. A big part of being a matrimonial lawyer is to take a counselling approach, to shield clients from superfluous nonsense and give them the information they need to make decisions.

I wish the legal profession could work together on the problems of family violence. As long as we just keep blaming each other, nothing will be gained. Ultimately we are each responsible.

LETTER FROM A COMMUNITY VOLUNTEER

We started working on this project about four years ago. I got involved because I'd been appalled by reading about wife abuse, and I thought if there was something I could do to help, I'd like to. Besides, I couldn't say "no" when I was asked to sit on a committee! But I must confess I felt pretty naive when I started. I thought I was really out of my depth.

My husband had mixed feelings about me being involved in something for battered women. We've always been active in the community, but he wasn't totally comfortable with me being connected with this project. He was only partly joking when he said maybe I shouldn't go skiing for a while because if I fell and broke my leg or came home with bruises, people would wonder if I was a battered wife!

We've certainly had our frustrations, both inside and outside our committee. For one thing, we were such a varied collection of people — some agency representatives and some ordinary interested citizens like me — and we had such different ideas about how to go about doing something, it took us a while to learn to work together. And "family violence" is such a horrendous problem, we really weren't sure where to start.

I thought we should find out more about the problem before we took any action, but some of the committee members wanted to start a fundraising campaign right away. As far as I was concerned, I didn't know enough at that point to know what we would raise funds **for**, but we had a lot of "discussions" (arguments!) before I got my way.

I almost wished I hadn't. Trying to get information turned out to be a frustrating exercise. At that time, there was no central place you could call to get information, and we had a terrible time finding out even the basics of what causes family violence, how much of it went on in our community, what services were already available, and so on.

It seemed like a lot of different people had something to do with the problem — police and social workers and doctors and counsellors and judges — but none of them talked to each other, and none of them wanted to talk to us. I got the feeling some of the professionals didn't have much use for volunteers.

We also wanted to talk to some families who had the problem, to find out what **they** thought might help, but of course part of the problem is that they don't want anyone to know they have a problem, so that was difficult. A women's shelter in another community put us in touch with some people who had broken out of a violent situation, and those people helped us understand what was needed.

Sometimes our committee would get so distracted by details that we'd lose sight of our purpose. At one point, we spent months debating whether we should be registered under the Societies Act, and then spent more months trying to write a constitution so we could be. Another time we spent a couple of months hassling over town zoning so we could build a women's shelter in a central location. Then we realized our community couldn't support a women's shelter anyway!

Trying to get the community interested in helping us was another problem. A lot of people didn't want to admit that wife battering could happen in our community, or if they knew, they didn't want to talk about it. One of our committee members gave a talk to a service club, and we heard later that some of the club members didn't want anything to do with us because they thought we were trying to make wives leave their husbands.

We knew from talking to groups in other communities that there was a definite danger of backlash against our project. In a small community — or even a big one — talking about "abused wives" is pretty threatening and may stir up a lot more hornet's nests than talking about, say, children's playgrounds. The service club incident made us stop and think just how we could minimize the possibility of generating community hostility that could set us back for years. After that, we made sure all the influential people were kept informed about what we were thinking and doing; we bounced ideas off them; we involved them whenever we could; and we went slowly and carefully. If any committee member picked up negative messages from the community, we made it an agenda item and talked about how we could neutralize the message.

When I think of where we started and where we are now, I'm proud of what we've accomplished.

We've done a lot of public education, and it's beginning to pay off. Nobody says any more (at least, not in my hearing!) that "it couldn't happen in our community." And more people understand the cycle of violence, and that people caught in it are really just like the rest of us, only more so! We've sponsored professional in-services, so the people who first have contact with family violence can recognize the signs and know how to help.

We are now supported by town council and most of the service clubs and church groups (they don't dare criticize us in public any more!), and the agencies are talking to each other and at least trying to work together, in spite of their conflicting mandates. We've talked to police, and lawyers, and even judges (gently and respectfully, of course) about enforcement of laws to do with assault.

We found a way to provide emergency transportation to a temporary safe place. We've made sure that each family in crisis has a volunteer that stays with them and helps them sort out the basics like housing and finances, as well as providing emotional support for at least a year. Our self-help groups have helped women get enough self-confidence and skill to change destructive relationships, and there are even a few abusing men who appear to have stopped hitting their families.

Last week was the highlight of my four year involvement. One of the women who had been helped asked to attend our committee meeting. Of course, we normally never meet the people who use our services, so it was a very special event. I listened to her story, and I found I had a lump in my throat. I was happy that she and her family are beginning to get back on their feet, and gratified that our services had been part of it.

I know we — and she — have other struggles ahead of us, but I also know it will be worth the hassle. We'll make it!

C. AN APPROACH TO MEETING THE NEEDS

Violent incidents are the most visible part of abusive relationships, so services are often geared to what is needed during a crisis. Of course crisis services are important, but if we are going to make a long-term difference, we also need to deal with the **context** in which the violent incidents occur.

That means taking into account the **factors** that contribute to the problem:

- characteristics of people in abusive relationships;
- the cycle of violence; the couple's long-term relationship;
- the community that surrounds the couple;
- the systems that touch them — legal, medical, social, political;
- attitudes in our society.

It means planning how to help those who are most likely to be in contact with the abusive partners. That might include friends, family, police, social workers, doctors, counsellors, lawyers, and other "front-line" people.

And it means taking **preventive** action, as well as offering crisis intervention and follow-up services.

A lot to do? Of course. But not impossible. Not if we work together.

The next few pages suggest what sort of help might be geared to the people in the situation and those around them. A summary page at the end illustrates how it all fits together.

Section three describes steps you might take to ensure that "what's needed" becomes available in your community.

FOR THE ABUSED PERSON

TIMING	WHAT THE ABUSED PERSON MIGHT NEED	HOW IT MIGHT BE PROVIDED
In the early stages (PREVENTIVE approaches)	• Self-esteem • Understanding of the cycle of violence • Understanding that she does not deserve to be beaten • Understanding that the violence is real, even though she would like to deny it • Understanding that even though she cares for her partner, she is not responsible for his actions; she does not cause the violence • Understanding that her partner will not stop the violence as long as she accepts it and makes excuses for it	Since the situation is probably not public, potential helpers are likely to be friends, family, or those with whom she has informal contact. Thus, helping them to be informed and supportive listeners may be a constructive approach: • Public information (articles, films, talk, etc.) about the cycle of violence • In-services to help professsionals (e.g. doctors) recognize the early signs of violence, and what they might say to the women • Self-confidence or communication courses the woman might attend • People talking to people (awareness vs. ignorance) will help.
In the violent stages (CRISIS Services)	• Physical safety for her and her children • Time to heal, physically and emotionally • Financial support • School for the children • Knowledge of her legal options • Help to sort out her relationship options • Patience and understanding of her ambivalence about staying or leaving the relationship • Knowledge that she is not alone	• Police or other services to stop the violence • Emergency housing for her and the children • Emergency transportation to housing • Child care services; people to see that children's schooling continues • Public assistance or other financial support • Counselling to help her heal, and understand her options • A volunteer advocate who stays with her during the crisis, and is available to help her deal with longer-term issues: housing, finance, etc.

FOR THE ABUSED PERSON

TIMING	WHAT THE ABUSED PERSON MIGHT NEED	HOW IT MIGHT BE PROVIDED
After the crisis (FOLLOW-UP Services)	• Physical safety • Patience for her ambivalence • Help to assess the reality and safety of her situation • Respect for her decisions (to stay or to leave the relationship) • Housing • Financial support • Schooling or child care • Exploration of longer-term issues: employment, on-going emotional support, etc.	• Restraining order/peace bond • Assistance to re-locate • A volunteer advocate to help her deal with practicalities, legal issues, etc. • Self-help groups or other opportunities to meet others who have been in her situation • On-going counselling and emotional support • Employment training/career planning

FOR THE ABUSING PERSON

TIMING	WHAT THE ABUSING PERSON MIGHT NEED	HOW IT MIGHT BE PROVIDED
In the early stages (PREVENTIVE approaches)	• He needs to understand that he does not need physical power to be a worthwhile man. • Understanding that he is responsible for his own actions • Self-esteem • Understanding that violence is not acceptable	• Public awareness/public attitude discussions about violence being unacceptable — even at home • Wife, neighbors, friends making him accountable for his actions; not "covering" or making excuses for him (might need education for them) • Self-confidence or communication courses • Anger management sessions
In the violent stage (CRISIS intervention)	• External restraint to stop the violence • Understanding that violence is not acceptable • Understanding that hitting his wife is assault, and assault is a crime • Understanding that he is responsible for his own actions	• Police or other intervention to stop the violence • Being physically separated from wife and children (different location; restraining order, etc.) • Being charged with assault*
After the crisis (FOLLOW-UP)	• Understanding he is responsible for his actions • Being made accountable for his behavior • External restraint • Learning other ways to express anger	• Being convicted of assault* • Being physically separated from the family as long as there is any possibility of violence • Counselling groups to explore the sources of his violence • Anger management sessions • Wife, family, friends, legal system holding him accountable (might need education and support for them)

**Studies in Canada and the United States indicate that when abusers are charged and convicted of assault, they are 40% to 70% less likely to repeat the offense.*

FOR THE CHILDREN

TIMING	WHAT THE CHILDREN MIGHT NEED	HOW IT MIGHT BE PROVIDED
Early stages (PREVENTION)	• Understanding they are not responsible for their parents' unhappiness • Understanding they are loveable and worthwhile • Understanding they are not the only children to have this experience	• Stories, books, films in children's libraries, schools • Contact with supportive adults who understand the situation (e.g. an adult who grew up in a violent home but has overcome the problems)
Violent stage (CRISIS intervention)	• Physical safety • Knowing they will be looked after • Understanding the crisis is not their fault • As much stability as possible — regular routines, same school, etc. • Understanding their parents love them, even though their actions may not make it obvious	• Emergency housing • Child care; adults who can ensure regular routines, school attendance, etc. • A supportive adult friend who can help the child understand s/he's not responsible, s/he is worthwhile and loveable
After the violence (FOLLOW-UP services)	• As much stability as possible • Information about what is happening and how it will affect the child • Fun • Learning non-violent ways to behave	• Adults who can ensure regular routines, school attendance, etc. • An adult friend (teacher, librarian, youth worker, volunteer) • Help to express feelings: play therapy, counselling, "feelings" activities through elementary school

WHAT PROFESSIONALS MIGHT NEED

- Training to help them understand the sources and dynamics of family violence
- Training to learn specific intervention strategies; and how to use resource materials
- Policies which allow them to be flexible and appropriate in their responses to family violence
- Back-up support to reduce possibility of being physically endangered
- On-going emotional support to help them deal with their own frustration
- Opportunities to work with those in other fields; operating procedures that enable inter-agency co-operation
- Knowledge of community politics
- Recognition and respect; appreciation that they are doing the best they can
- Sharing success stories

WHAT VOLUNTEERS MIGHT NEED (CAREGIVERS, FRIENDS, CONCERNED CITIZENS)

- Easy access to information, resource people, services
- Training to help them understand the sources and dynamics of family violence
- Training to learn specific intervention strategies
- Knowledge of community politics
- Opportunities to collaborate with professionals; acceptance and respect for the valuable role of volunteers
- Back-up support to reduce possibility of being physically endangered
- On-going emotional support to help them deal with their own frustration
- Sharing success stories

WHAT THE COMMUNITY MIGHT NEED

- Public awareness activities to influence attitudes about violence, the sanctity of the family, and other prevailing values
- Public education to understand the sources and dynamics of family violence
- Information about the incidence of family violence in their own community
- Information about what actions are being taken
- Information about what services and resources are available — e.g. regional shelters, counselling, education, laws and their enforcement, etc.
- Understanding that family violence is in every community; theirs is not a "bad" community, just a normal one

D. SUMMARY OF WHAT MIGHT BE NEEDED:

AN OVER-ALL PERSPECTIVE

Preventive Approaches

- Public awareness/public education about family violence
- Self-confidence/communication courses that might be attended by those in abusive relationships
- Self-help groups, counselling, or other services for "at risk" families
- Public awareness/public education about attitudes and values that foster non-abusive relationships
- Professional awareness, education, support
- Collaboration between professionals and volunteers

Crisis Intervention Services

- Police/legal protection
- Emergency medical services
- Emergency housing
- Emergency transportation
- Emergency child care
- Physical restraint, assault charge for violent person
- Crisis counselling
- Volunteer advocate to stay with assaulted person

Follow-Up Services

- Volunteer advocates to stay in touch with abused person, abuser, children
- Co-ordination of agency services: police, medical, counselling, financial assistance, housing, etc.
- Co-operation between professionals in developing public awareness, common approaches, networks
- Big Brother/Big Sister or other programs to allow children to have contact with adults who are not in crisis
- Public education and policy so abusing person is held accountable for his actions by wife, friends, legal system
- Longer-term housing, financial support, employment training, etc. for abused person
- Self-help groups
- Continued work on public attitudes

BREAKING THE PATTERN

How Alberta Communities Can Help Assaulted Women And Their Families

SECTION THREE:
WHAT WE CAN DO

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A. YES, ONE PERSON CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Remember Helen Nimco? Helen's concern about family violence in her own community led her to seek out information. Her concern about the difficulty of finding information led her to propose that this handbook be developed. Her proposal led to hundreds of people becoming involved. You are reading one of the concrete results of their conversations.

Most of the women's shelters in Alberta, and most of the other services available, started from one person's concern. Someone cared about a problem, talked to others, and began to make things happen. In communities across the province, the origin of worthwhile community services can often be traced to one person's concern.

When one person is concerned, becomes informed, and talks to other people, positive things begin to happen.

You've already taken the first step. You must be concerned, or you would not be reading this handbook. Some other things you can do are listed on the following pages.

Our purpose is not to prescribe "the answers" for you and your community. Rather, the following are steps you can take, and a process you can adapt, so you and your community can find the answers that will work for you.

1. Become Informed

a. Read

The resource kit that came with this handbook contains a directory of Regional Co-ordinators who, in co-operation with the provincial Office for the Prevention of Family Violence, may be able to tell you where to get information. The resource kit also has a bibliography of written information about family violence.

Once you start looking for information, you'll notice that newspapers and magazines often have news items and articles about family violence. (Media attention is an encouraging sign that the public is beginning to care about the problem.)

Your local library may have information, or may be able to get it for you through an inter-library loan.

b. Watch

A few videos and films about wife assault and family violence are now available. The resource kit lists some of them, and your Regional Co-ordinator may be able to tell you about others that have been developed since the resource kit was issued.

As you begin to seek out information, you will notice that family violence is often the topic of television shows. The theme of family violence also appears in movies.

c. Listen

As you think and learn about family violence, you may notice that your sensitivities change. Comments you would not have noticed before may now jump out at you, as reflections of the attitudes that foster family violence.

You may hear from people who have experienced violent relationships. Listening will help you understand their situation.

d. Feel

As you read and watch and listen, your emotions will likely be touched. You may be shocked at some of the things you learn, or troubled to discover that you can identify with some aspects of violent relationships. Thinking about family violence may bring back memories of difficult times in your own life.

Don't be afraid of your emotion. It is normal and valuable. Having a "feel" for what violent relationships are about will make you a more empathetic and effective helper, help you be realistic about how to approach the problem, and more able to make a difference in your community.

2. Talk to people

Who do you talk to? Whoever you have contact with. Friends. People you work with. People in community organizations.

What do you say? You can talk about how you feel as you learn about family violence. You can talk about discovering that family violence happens in your community. You can say you've learned that people in violent relationships are not so different from other people. You can tell how the cycle of violence traps people in a destructive situation. You can describe some of the approaches that might help (some are suggested in Section Two of this handbook).

In your conversation, you will be accomplishing three things:

- You will be getting emotional support for your own reactions to what you are learning;
- You will be sharing information, so others become informed;
- You will be helping other people to care about the problem too.

3. Find a group

A group of people concerned about family violence may already exist in your community. Here are some ways to find out:

- If your community has a Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) or Community Services program, the office staff may know if there is a group; consult FCSS and ask for their help;
- Your Regional Co-ordinator (names are listed in the resource kit) may know if a group exists in your community;
- If your region has a women's shelter, the shelter almost certainly has a board of directors who may be concerned about other issues relating to family violence; the board may have sub-committees you could join;
- Existing groups (e.g. an FCSS project, a church group, a women's group, a service club) may be willing to form a sub-committee to explore the issue of family violence;
- Watch your local paper for news items or advertisements that indicate other people are concerned about family violence.

4. Start a group

If you didn't find a group of concerned people in your community, you may want to start your own group. Here's how:

a. Identify a few interested people

During your conversations with other people, you probably met some who seemed to be concerned too, or who were receptive to what you talked about.

Start by approaching them individually, to ask if they are interested in getting together with some people to talk about family violence. Four to six concerned people are enough to start a group.

b. Get together

When you have found four to six people who say they are interested in talking to other people about the problem, invite them to an informal get-together.

The location should be comfortable and informal — a kitchen, living room or small office would be appropriate.

First, make sure everyone is introduced to everyone else.

Then, explain that you've become concerned about family violence, that you know it happens in your community, and that you thought they might be concerned too. Invite others to tell why they came to the get-together.

When you've had a chance to find out everyone's particular interest, the group members can decide:

- Do they want to learn more about the problem, together? (They could start by sharing copies of this handbook.)
- Do they want to get together again?
- Do they want to start a process to get others in the community concerned? (Part B of this section suggests steps to follow.)
- Do they want to involve other people?

The group members may decide they just want to have a conversation, and not pursue the issue further. That's not a waste of time. People talking will mean more people in the community are informed and interested.

However, if the group decides to get together again, you could handle the next get-together as follows.

c. The second get-together

Again choose a comfortable informal location. If there are new people, make sure everyone is introduced and explain what happened at the first get-together. Give everyone a chance to tell why they are there, so everyone understands everyone else's motivation.

If the group decided at its first get-together that it just wanted to have informal conversations, then do that. People sharing their thoughts and feelings increases understanding in the community.

If the group decided at its first get-together that it wanted to learn more about the problem, compare notes about what each person has learned since the last get-together, or have a special presentation at your meeting.

At the end of the get-together, ask "where do we go from here?" as you did at the end of the first get-together.

d. Turning point

As a group continues to meet informally, some changes are likely to occur:

- Even if the group started with a very low-key purpose ("Let's just get together and talk"), at some point a few people are likely to decide, "Let's try to **do** something in our community." The point at which four to six people say, "I'm concerned and I want to **take some action**" is the point at which you have a different kind of group.
- The group will probably experience a bit of tension and wheel-spinning as it begins to change its focus from informal sharing to action.

- The membership of the group is likely to change:
  - Some people will have got what they wanted from the informal conversations, or from the learning activities, and will drop out.
  - Other people will invite friends to join the group, so you will have new members too. Each time new people join, make sure they are introduced to everyone, and filled in on what has happened so far.
- The group will likely experience a "groping" stage as it adapts to new members and tries to define its new purpose.

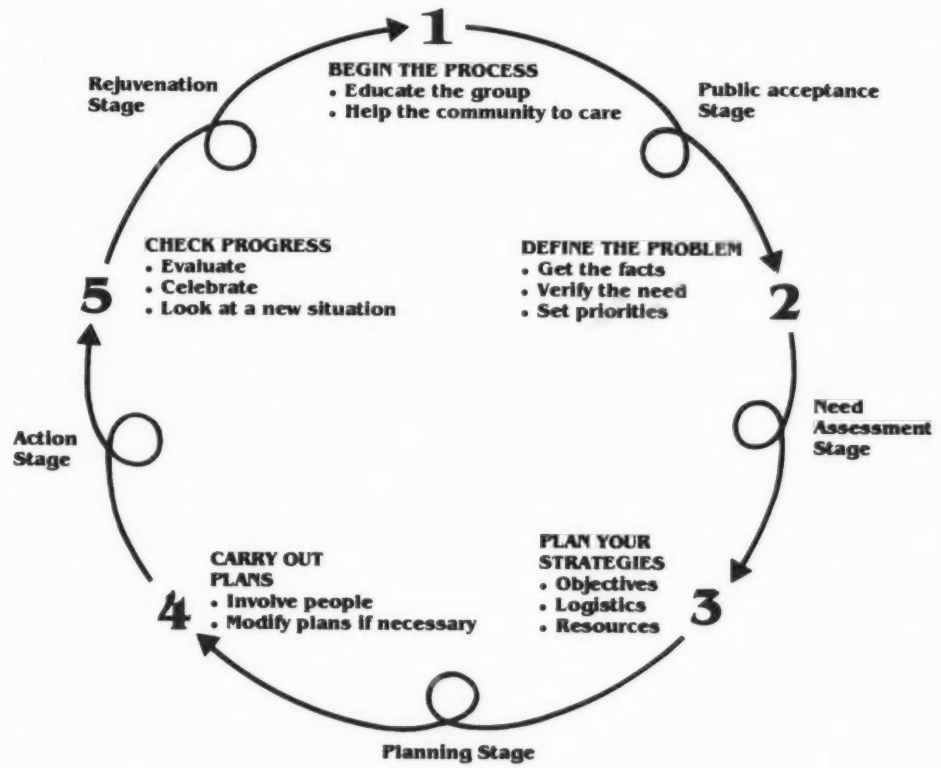
To this point, you have learned more about yourself, helped other people to become informed, shared thoughts and feelings, and increased the understanding of a few people in your community. You have already accomplished something.

Once you have a group of people who want to take some action, you are ready for the next stage: to make a more visible difference in your community. How to approach the task? Suggestions for a process begin on this page ...

B. YES, THE COMMUNITY CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

A community group can help ensure that "what's needed" to help reduce family violence becomes available in their community, by following a community process. The rest of this handbook explains more about the process.

A COMMUNITY PROCESS TO REDUCE FAMILY VIOLENCE



As the curly arrows illustrate, the process is not necessarily smooth. Sometimes it's one step forward and two steps back! But many groups have found that following the process gives them the greatest possible chance of reducing family violence in their community. The process will help your group get the help you need to find appropriate answers for your community.

It's no secret that family violence is not the easiest community issue to work on. Few if any community groups have had completely smooth progress. (If your group has difficulties from time to time, that means you're normal!)

To help increase your chances of reducing family violence, carry out a community process that has worked for many groups. Adapting the process to your situation will help you find answers that will work in your community.

FOLLOW ALONG while we outline ...

A. The TASK at each stage;
B. WHY this stage is necessary;
C. HOW a group might accomplish the tasks at this stage;
D. What BARRIERS a group might encounter;
E. What REWARDS a group can expect.

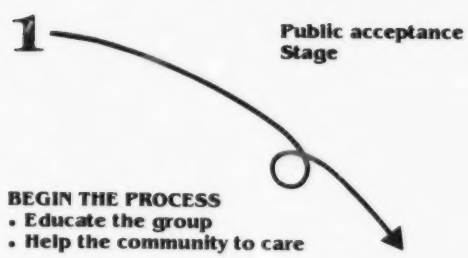
AND INTRODUCING ... TWO ALBERTA "COMMUNITIES"

To help illustrate the community process, we've invented two communities:

METRO CITY, an urban area which includes a major city surrounded by a cluster of large towns.

EVERGREEN DISTRICT, a rural region with several small communities located within a large, sparsely-populated area.

Following, we explain the steps at each stage of the community process, including "stories" of how Metro City and Evergreen District carried out the steps. The "stories" are adapted from the experiences of real communities.



STAGE ONE: BEGIN THE PROCESS

A. The Task

The first task of your group is two-fold:

a. EDUCATE YOUR GROUP
Group members should be familiar with how and why family violence happens, and should understand the cycle of violence.

b. HELP THE COMMUNITY TO CARE
At this stage, you are not asking any member of the public to do anything. But you do want the public to be aware:
- that family violence exists in the community;
- how and why it can happen;
- that it matters.

B. Why this step is necessary

If group members do not understand how and why family violence can happen, and the cycle of violence, they may come up with inappropriate actions and solutions later on. Group members need a basic understanding of the problem so they will be realistic in their approaches.

Preliminary public education is necessary to generate public interest and public support for whatever action your group eventually takes. If the community does not believe there's a problem, or does not believe it matters, your group will not get the community help it's going to need.

C. How to carry out the tasks

a. Ideas to educate the group

- Have every group member read this handbook; discuss it at a meeting.
- Ask one or two people to read the handbook and summarize the main points for discussion at a meeting. (Characteristics of those in violent relationships, the cycle of violence, what's needed, might be main sections to summarize.)
- Contact your regional co-ordinator or Office for the Prevention of Family Violence and ask for other background information to be sent to your group. Ask one or two people to summarize the main points and present them at a meeting.
- Watch a video or film at a meeting.

- Invite a social worker, counsellor, policeman, representative of a women's shelter, or other person who has contact with family violence to talk to your group. (You could invite others to this meeting too, and be educating the public as you educate your group.)

  NOTE: as you may have gathered from the Book of Letters, not all professionals have had the opportunity to acquire in-depth state-of-the-art knowledge about family violence.

  Your regional co-ordinator may be able to suggest the names of knowledgeable people. Call someone who is knowledgeable, and ask that person to suggest an appropriate speaker for your group.

- If you know a person who has been in a violent relationship but who has broken out of it and is willing to talk about the experience, invite that person to talk to your group.

- Provide time at meetings for members to talk about the feelings they experience as they learn more about the topic of family violence. This will provide emotional support to your group members, and also help the group anticipate what reactions they might get from other people in the community.

- Other ideas:

b. Ideas to help the community to care

NOTE: you are not asking for anything at this stage. You merely want the public to know **that the problem exists** and **that it matters.**

- IMPORTANT STEP: Identify key people in your community — those who are respected by many people, who influence others' opinions, whose support might be valuable in the future. Key people are those whose good opinion helps the community feel a particular project is legitimate and worth supporting (sometimes key people are called "legitimizers").

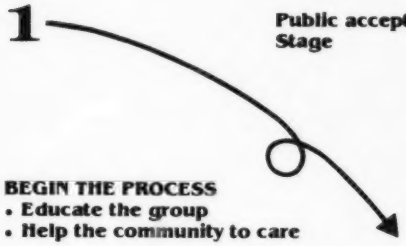
  Decide who will talk to each of the key people, to discuss what you are learning, and to tell the key people what your group is doing.

  (Key people like to know what is going on in the community. If key people do not believe the problem exists, or that it matters, their lack of support may block your group later on.)

- Have each member agree to have a casual conversation about what they are learning about family violence, with three different people, before the next meeting. (If you have seven group members, that's 21 more people in the community who will have exposure to the ideas.)

- As your group becomes better informed, offer to give presentations to church groups, service clubs, or other groups.

- Sponsor information sessions about family violence. Extend personal invitations to key people and other potentially interested citizens. Use films,



speakers, panel presentations, followed by question and answer sessions, to help explain violent relationships.

- If your local papers run columns by agency representatives, ask the agency representatives if they would do a column on family violence.
- Provide your local paper, radio station, or community TV channel with information about what you are doing. Ask local media to run news items about your activities. (Note: be careful that your media coverage is not distorted! Spend time with local editors/reporters to be sure they have accurate information.)
- Other ideas:

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IMPORTANT: As your group moves through subsequent steps, remember to keep key individuals and the public informed about what you are doing.

HOW THE TWO "COMMUNITIES" HANDLED STAGE ONE

In METRO CITY, the urban area with a major city surrounded by a cluster of large towns, staff and volunteers from a city crisis line became concerned about the number of calls they received about violence between spouses.

They contacted representatives from the city's emergency women's shelter, and from the police, for initial meetings to see if these agencies were experiencing a lot of calls. They were. The group members compared notes about their experiences and thought, "Who else might be interested?"

The group thought of 30 other agencies and organizations who might have a concern about family violence. Letters were written to the executive directors and/or chairmen of the boards of these other organizations. The letters said, in effect, "We are concerned about family violence and we thought you might be too. We're not sure what we can do, but are you interested in working with us to figure something out?" The letters were followed up with a phone call and/or a visit.

In EVERGREEN DISTRICT, a rural area with several small communities located within a large sparsely-populated area, a woman in one of the communities became concerned about wife abuse.

She talked to some friends, one of whom was from another community which had a Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) program. The friend talked to the FCSS director, who did some quiet checking with social workers and police. This preliminary check revealed that wife abuse did indeed exist in the district.

The FCSS director invited the Alberta Social Services regional co-ordinator to meet the woman and three of her friends. The group decided the issue was too big for one community to tackle. They came up with a list of contacts in five communities in the district, and in the next few months found opportunities for conversations in which they let others know the problem existed, and sounded out if others were concerned.

D. Barriers you may encounter during Step One

- GROUP IMPATIENCE:

  Some of your group members may be restless about educating themselves and the community. They may be anxious to "get busy and **do** something," rather than taking time to become better informed.

  (Learning about some of the damage done by community groups who jumped in before they understood the problem may help restless members realize that taking time to become well-informed is not a waste of time. Sponsoring public awareness events — a concrete action — may help restless members feel they are doing something.)

- COMMUNITY RESISTANCE:

  As soon as you begin talking about family violence, you may encounter community attitudes such as, "It doesn't happen in our community," "Women ask for it," or "It's none of our business what happens within a family." The group should discuss how it will respond to these attitudes.

  ("Myths and realities" in Section One may give the group ideas about how to respond to such attitudes. Hearing from someone who has experienced the problem — in person, by reading anecdotes, or by watching video or film — may have enough emotional impact to help shake some of these attitudes.)

- In rural communities,people may be particularly reluctant to acknowledge that family violence could exist among their neighbors and friends. If they are aware of violence in specific families, they may be even more uncomfortable about "opening up a can of worms" and might prefer that nobody talked about the issue of family violence.

  (Helping them understand that violence happens in all communities, and that help is possible, **may** make it easier for them to acknowledge the problem.)

- In urban communities, it will be harder to identify key individuals, or to reach the community at large.
  (It will probably be necessary to break the "community" into smaller target groups and decide how to reach each target group.)

E. Rewards from Stage One

- YOU'LL BE REALISTIC

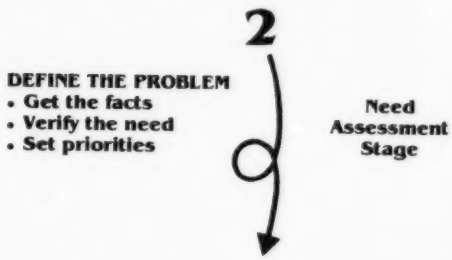
  Your group will be better informed about family violence, and thus more realistic in its approaches to solving the problem. Taking time to become informed will avoid costly mistakes later on.

- INCREASED POSSIBILITY OF COMMUNITY SUPPORT

  As a result of your low-key and informal conversations, and letting others know what you are learning, the community will **gradually** be more receptive to acknowledging that family violence exists, and that it matters. You are paving the way for community support when your group takes action later on.

- LONG-TERM PREVENTIVE POSSIBILITIES

  Increasing public awareness and understanding of the problem will also contribute to long-term prevention of family violence.



STAGE TWO: DEFINE THE PROBLEM — NEED ASSESSMENT PHASE

A. The Task

Having educated your group members about the nature of family violence, and begun the process of raising public awareness, you are ready to find more specific information. During the need assessment phase, you have three tasks:

1. GET THE FACTS — about family violence in your own community: the extent of the problem, the needs of those in violent relationships, the resources that already exist, gaps that may exist.
2. VERIFY THE NEED — verify your conclusions with your sources of information, with key people in the community, and with the public.
3. SET PRIORITIES — decide what needs your group will focus on.

B. Why this stage is necessary

Your group needs to GET THE FACTS about family violence in your specific community, to know what is needed, to provide a basis for your planning, and to help set priorities. Getting specific information helps provide a "reality base" for the group's actions.

Your group needs to VERIFY THE NEED with your sources of information, with key people in the community, and with the public, to be sure you understand the situation, and to be sure key people and the public at large believe there is a problem. Verifying the need will help establish your group's credibility with the community.

Your group needs to SET PRIORITIES about what aspect of the need it will address, because no group can do everything. Better to develop a focussed, effective effort than scatter your energy and not accomplish much of anything.

C. How to carry out the need assessment tasks

1. Get the facts

In the Beginning Stage of your community action process, you gathered general information about family violence or wife abuse — how and why it happens, the cycle of violence, what might be needed. Your task was to increase general understanding of violent relationships.

In the Need Assessment Stage, you want to find out more specific information about wife abuse in our community:

THE PROBLEM — how much wife abuse is known to occur in the community?

THE NEEDS — what are the needs of people in violent relationships? The needs of those who try to help? What community attitudes affect those in violent relationships?

THE RESOURCES — what services, expertise, and funding sources already exist to meet the needs?

THE GAPS — what is left to be done, to help reduce wife abuse in the community?

ASKING is really the only way to gather information about the extent of the problem, the needs, the resources and the gaps in regard to wife abuse in your community. A variety of methods — interviews, informal conversations, questionnaire surveys, checking statistical records — are all variations of ASKING.

WHO should you ask? Three groups:

- AGENCIES AND PROFESSIONALS who may have contact with wife abuse, such as:
  - police
  - Alberta Social Services district offices
  - Clergy/Ministerial Associations
  - counselling agencies
  - doctors, medical associations, paramedics, hospital
  - AID or distress lines
  - Courts, Legal Aid, lawyers
  - regional women's shelters (may get referrals from your area)
- THOSE WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED violent relationships but are now distanced enough to have perspective about their experience. They can tell you more about what was or what would have been helpful to them, and what was missing.
- KEY INDIVIDUALS and other members of the public. Getting their views about the problem, the needs, the resources and the gaps will not only give you another perspective of the community situation, it will help you anticipate what community attitudes you may have to deal with later.
- Other ideas:

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The following points should be kept in mind as you get the facts about the problem, the needs, the resources and the gaps in your community:

- You'll need to establish your credentials, i.e. what right you have to ask questions. Agencies and professionals in particular will want to know who you are and how you plan to use the information before they share their information and plans.
- We know the abused and abusing person try to keep their violence a secret. A violent relationship often continues for a long time before it becomes public. As well, not every agency in contact with family violence recognizes occurrences of violence, or keeps records of these. Therefore, your group may find it difficult to estimate the extent of the problem in your community.
- Your community may have existing services that **could** serve those in violent relationships, but at the moment lack specific expertise. You'll want to know the quality as well as the type of services that exist.

When your group looks at the information you've gathered:

- the estimated extent of the problem in your community;
- what is needed (prevention, intervention, and follow-up services, as listed in Section Two of this handbook, and as amplified by people you've talked to); AND
- what is already available (specifically appropriate for family violence);

you will probably see things missing.

This becomes the preliminary basis of defining what needs you will address, and what your group's priorities will be.

But before you make hard decisions about future action, the group must VERIFY THE NEED ...

2. Verify the need

Having gathered information, you now want two things to happen:

- people outside the group to verify that you have correctly identified the needs and gaps;
- the public to accept that the need is real.

SOME WAYS TO VERIFY THE NEED:

- Go back to all the people you talked to in the information-gathering stage — agency and professional representatives, those who have experienced violent relationships, other individuals. Let them know what you have found out, your preliminary conclusions, the gaps you've identified. (Gaps could include lack of public or professional education, non-existence of services, or existing services not specifically geared to family violence.)

Check: do the people you talked to agree with your findings? If not, re-assess and perhaps revise your information.

> **CAUTION: be sure your information is credible before you go public! More than one Alberta group has run into barriers because their information was discredited. The public didn't believe the information, and so didn't believe the problems were real. It slowed down the process by several years.**

- Make sure the "key individuals" (those who influence opinions) are well informed about your findings. Give them copies of your reports; have conversations with them. Be sure you understand their response to your information — their response might reflect the community's response.
- Once your information has been verified and accepted by people outside your group, let the public know.
  - Group members can have another round of informal conversations with whoever they are in contact with;
  - Give presentations to community groups;
  - Run news releases to explain what you've done and how you've verified your information;
  - Hold public information meetings.

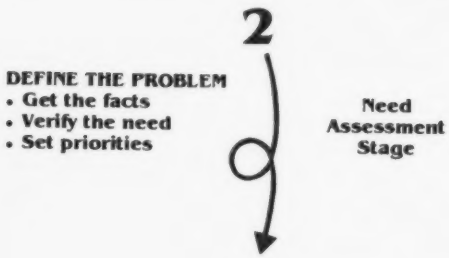
3. Set priorities

By now, your group will have a sense of the problems, the needs, the potential resources and the gaps in your community. This is a turning point for the group. It is moving from exploratory activities to concrete action.

Some groups ask an outside person — a facilitator — to help them examine the issues and decisions the group must handle at this stage.

In light of the information you now have, the group has a major decision to make: of all the issues you **could** address, which issue(s) will the group focus on? The group has to decide:

THE GROUP PURPOSE, or reason for existence:
Should the group have a **broad** purpose (e.g. "to reduce wife abuse in the community")? OR
Should it have a more **specific** purpose (e.g. "to ensure abused women have access to emergency services")?



Having made that decision, the group should now look at itself with new eyes, because past ways of operating may no longer be appropriate as the group moves from an exploratory to an action stage. It needs to review:

- THE STRUCTURE, or how the group is organized:
  Should the group be an informal, loosely-knit organization? OR
  Should the group be legally incorporated, with formal officers and procedures? (If the group expects to handle money, it should incorporate.)
- THE MEMBERSHIP, or who belongs to the group:
  In light of the community needs to be addressed, and the purpose of the group, should other people be invited to join?
  Many groups find it useful to include:
  - one or two people who have experienced violent relationships;
  - agency and professional representatives;
  - people who have credibility in the community at large.

HOW THE URBAN "COMMUNITY" HANDLED STAGE TWO

When we left Metro City, representatives from a crisis line, the police and a women's emergency shelter had sent letters to about 30 organizations to ask if they would like to help find solutions to the problem of family violence. 25 people agreed to attend an initial exploratory meeting.

The meeting participants talked about their experiences with family violence, and decided it would be useful to have more information. It seemed that each organization had a part of the story, but nobody had the total picture.

The participants chose a nine-member steering committee to work out how to compile information, and to keep everyone else informed of its activities. The crisis line agency agreed to handle administration for the steering committee, with other agencies offering to provide additional clerical help if needed.

The steering committee applied for a short-term employment grant to hire interviewers-researchers who would gather more information about family violence in Metro City and its surrounding towns. When their research report was ready, the steering committee called a meeting of all those who had contributed information, so they could all review the contents of the report.

The report said there were a number of services theoretically available, but they often were not focussed on the specific needs of those in abusive relationships, and efforts were not always co-ordinated. The report made an interesting observation: services might be irrelevant if nobody looked at the community attitudes and values that condoned violence within families. The report generated considerable discussion; especially when its contents were summarized in local media.

The steering committee's next few meetings were taken up with soul-searching about what to do next. Should they focus on the needs of abused persons? Of abusers? Or should they tackle the broader issue of community attitudes?

Their decision: to reduce family violence in the community, they would try to influence public attitudes.

HOW THE RURAL "COMMUNITIES" HANDLED STAGE TWO

In Evergreen District, four private citizens, an FCSS director, and the Alberta Social Services regional co-ordinator had decided the issue of wife abuse was too big for one community to handle. They talked informally to people in the five communities in the district, to let people know wife abuse existed in their district, and to find out if others were concerned.

When they had a few interested people in each community, they called a meeting of people from the five communities. The meeting was attended by the regional co-ordinator, police, social workers, a counsellor, four FCSS directors (the fifth community did not have FCSS), a lawyer and private citizens.

Having compared notes about what they did and did not know, the meeting participants decided that within their group they had enough contacts to find out the additional information they needed. The FCSS directors agreed to co-ordinate information gathering in their four respective communities, and one of the private citizens gathered information from the fifth community.

Three months later, the participants re-convened to compare notes. Throughout the district, those who had been contacted felt more wife abuse existed

than was visible to the public or to agencies. Few services were available within the district. Several group members had heard stories of women too embarrassed to tell anyone their situation, with no means of transportation to counselling or emergency services outside of the district.

One of the participants offered to write up a "district report" summarizing the information which had been gathered from the five communities. The group designated one person in each community who would distribute copies of the report to all those who had supplied information, to other interested individuals, and to the local newspapers. The local contact people also arranged for community meetings at which the report was discussed.

Two months later the group met again to compare notes on the various community activities and to decide their next step. Though in one community they had encountered some attempt to discredit their report, they felt reasonably sure they had verified that "lack of emergency services" was a genuine district gap, and one that was recognized by some citizens in all five communities.

The group decided to focus its attention on "access to emergency services for abused women."

D. Barriers you may encounter during the need assessment stage

BARRIERS TO GETTING THE FACTS:

- Agencies may not have information about family violence, or may be unwilling to share information. Thus, it may be difficult to estimate the extent of the problem. (Be honest about limitations of your information.)
- Information about available services is sometimes hard to find. (The lists in the resource kit should help.)
- You may find a discrepancy between the services theoretically available, and actual service provided. (Be careful not to alienate agencies who could help, but who won't if they feel you are attacking or criticizing them.)

BARRIERS TO VERIFYING THE NEED:

- Outside people may challenge your information. (Make sure you can explain how you got your figures, how you identified what resources are available, and how you came to your conclusions about what is needed.)
- Others may not agree with your interpretation of the information. (Listen to them, and check your conclusion — after all, you could be wrong!)

BARRIERS TO SETTING PRIORITIES:

- Thinking broadly — prevention, intervention, follow-up — may be hard in the face of pressure to "get a shelter" or some other crisis service.
- Different group members may strongly disagree on what the purpose of the group should be. You may lose some members.
- The group may not wish to examine its purpose and structure. If it doesn't, there may be later problems when group members try to accomplish incompatible goals, or the structure no longer helps get the job done.

E. Rewards from the needs assessment stage

- You'll have a credible basis of information (make sure it **is** credible!) on which to base future action.
- The community will believe the needs are real. Your conversations with many people have laid the groundwork for future collaboration.
- You'll have a clear sense of direction, a structure to get the job done, and the most appropriate members to achieve the purpose.

Planning Stage

STAGE THREE: PLAN YOUR STRATEGIES

A. Planning tasks

There are three tasks to be accomplished during the planning stage:

1. SET GOALS AND OBJECTIVES;
2. ORGANIZE LOGISTICS;
3. GATHER RESOURCES.

B. Why the planning stage is necessary

If you don't know where you're going (goals and objectives), you may end up somewhere else. If you don't know who's doing what (logistics), it might not get done. If you don't have the help you need (resources), you may not be able to help those in abusive relationships.

Planning will give your group a sense of direction and accomplishment, and help you focus your energy. Planning increases your chances of making a difference in your community.

C. How to carry out the planning tasks

1. Set goals and objectives

In light of community needs and gaps, and the group purpose, identify:
- what specific needs the group will address (these will become the group GOALS), and
- what will be accomplished in regard to each goal (these will be the OBJECTIVES).

EXAMPLE:

COMMUNITY NEED: FOLLOW-UP FOR ABUSED PERSONS

GOAL: to ensure abused women in crisis have on-going support, encouragement and practical assistance for at least one year after the crisis.

OBJECTIVES:
- to develop a network of trained volunteers to stay in touch with women for one year after they leave emergency shelter or refuge.
- to encourage service agencies (e.g. public housing, counselling, employment training) to be aware of the special needs of abused women.

2. Organize logistics:

Work out what must be done to accomplish the objectives: **who** will do **what**, by **when**, and **how will you know** it is done?

3. Gather resources:

Identify what resources the group needs (time, expertise, facilities, publicity, money), and how it will obtain these.

HOW THE URBAN "COMMUNITY" CARRIED OUT THE PLANNING STAGE

The steering committee in Metro City had decided its purpose was to reduce family violence in their community, by influencing public attitudes. The committee spent several meetings trying to define more specifically what they were trying to accomplish, and how they could do it. The process culminated with the following statement of goals:

1. *AWARENESS OF VIOLENCE — raise the community's awareness of the abuse within families that exists in our community;*
2. *ACKNOWLEDGE CAPACITY FOR VIOLENCE — help people acknowledge their own capacity for and/or involvement in violence;*
3. *COMMUNICATE ALTERNATIVES FOR ANGER — communicate the alternatives to cope with stress, anger and rage;*
4. *COMMUNICATE COMMUNITY RESOURCES — make the public aware of the program and treatment resources available in the Metro City area.*
5. *DEMONSTRATE EFFECTIVENESS/MEASURE PREVENTIVE IMPACT of the campaign in reducing personal and family violence in the community.*

Objectives to accomplish the goals included a media campaign; other public education activities; development of a questionnaire to help people assess their own stress/anger/hostility level; and a contest for "Ten Most Effective Ways to Prevent Violence." The campaign would culminate in the month of March, designated as "Stop Violence" month and featuring various special events.

The committee decided that with the scope of its activities, it should incorporate. The group became the "Stop Violence Coalition." A donor made possible the hiring of a full time staff person. Steering committee members all became conveners of committees, which then involved dozens of other individuals and organizations in carrying out the details of the plan.

The committee relied on contributions of in-kind and donated services from corporations, organizations, foundations and individuals.

HOW THE RURAL "COMMUNITIES" CARRIED OUT THE PLANNING STAGE

Representatives from five communities in Evergreen District were aware of preventive and follow-up needs, but because of the lack of services in their district, they chose to focus on crisis needs. Their purpose was "to ensure abused women have access to appropriate emergency services."

After several meetings in which they grappled with issues such as what services were feasible within their rural district, they defined the following goals:

1. *AWARENESS OF SERVICES in the district, and in the nearest urban centre;*
2. *PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION to ensure local professionals in contact with wife abuse know how to respond effectively, and what services are available;*
3. *EMERGENCY TRANSPORTATION for abused women who require emergency services that cannot be provided within the district.*

Objectives included the development of a community directory, publicity about available services, hosting workshops and in-service training events for professionals, and the development of a volunteer transportation network.

The group looked at its role and structure, and decided its role was to encourage and co-ordinate the achievement of their objectives. Their loose-knit unincorporated status seemed appropriate, but they worked with organizations in the five communities to form task groups who carried out the objectives.

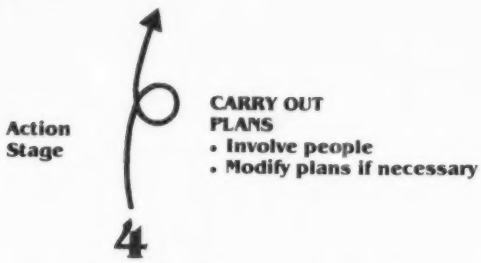
Since the group did not directly sponsor any activities, but rather worked through other organizations, it did not require funds. It did, however, require a commitment of staff and volunteer time, and the use of some facilities.

D. Barriers you might encounter at the planning stage

- Sometimes people are reluctant to spend time identifying goals and objectives. They'd rather jump into action without any planning!
- Even though the group agrees on its objectives, it may disagree on how to accomplish the objectives. There could be friction within the group.

E. Rewards of the planning stage

- You'll have a sense of direction and achievement.
- You'll know you've thought out the best way to accomplish your objectives.
- Good planning increases your community credibility.



STAGE FOUR: CARRY OUT PLANS—ACTION PHASE

A. The task (at last!) is to carry out the plans to achieve your objectives.

B. A few pointers

- Ensure that all relevant people are involved in your activities. For example, if you are dealing with "emergency transportation," co-operate with other groups in the community who have a connection with transportation.
- Ensure that "key individuals" are informed of your plans and activities. If key individuals have objections, discuss them at your next meeting.
- Ensure that the public is informed of what you are doing. If you encounter resistance, go back and work some more on public awareness, and make sure you really have involved all the appropriate people.
- At each meeting, check to see how the plans are progressing. If an action doesn't work out the way you expected, modify the plans.

C. Barriers you may encounter during the action stage

Every group has its stories of snags and roadblocks! Common sources are:

- different understandings among group members about what the group is trying to accomplish; different values and goals;
- lack of involvement by other significant people;
- lack of public support (this may translate into backlash against the project, or the public being unwilling to supply necessary resources);
- inadequate planning; details overlooked;
- misunderstandings about who is responsible for what;
- poor communication among people carrying out the tasks.

D. Rewards

- Getting the job done! Helping to reduce family violence in your community.
- A sense of accomplishment.

HOW THE URBAN "COMMUNITY" CARRIED OUT THE ACTION STAGE

In Metro City, the "Stop Violence Coalition," with the help of a volunteer marketing person, identified concepts and strategies for a campaign, and a nine-month timetable of action plans that would culminate in "No-Hitter Month." They took their ideas to an advertising agency, who agreed to "adopt" them (i.e. donate its services.)

Activities included:

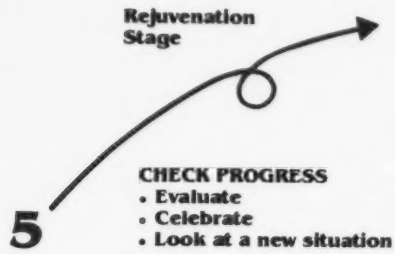
- *A media campaign: television spots, posters, radio spots, news items, promoted the theme that "Violence is no comedy."*
- *The mayors of Metro City and surrounding towns declared Stop Violence Month.*
- *The Parents Anonymous 24-hour crisis line became the "Violence Hotline" during Stop Violence Month.*
- *The pitcher of a local baseball team was named Honorary Chairperson of No-Hitter Day, and starred in a television public service announcement. On No-Hitter Day, the scoreboard at the stadium carried a message encouraging everyone to be a "no hitter." On cue, the pitcher pitched a winning game.*
- *Shopping centre displays promoted No-Hitter Day.*
- *A packet was sent to every church with a fact sheet about violence, and biblical references. Ministers, priests and rabbis were encouraged to devote a sermon to non-violent lifestyles.*
- *Buttons and bumper stickers said, "An assault free diet never killed anyone."*
- *50,000 resource booklets gave clues to identifying anger, suggestions for alternatives for violent behavior, phone numbers of community services.*
- *A questionnaire printed in the daily paper helped people to realize the continuum of stress, anger, hostility and violence. The scoring system included suggestions for high scorers.*
- *A contest invited entries for the "Ten Most Effective Ways to Prevent Family Violence." The contest was judged by penitentiary inmates who had been convicted of violent offenses.*

HOW THE RURAL "COMMUNITIES" CARRIED OUT THE ACTION STAGE

Through task groups in each of the five communities, the Evergreen District co-ordinating committee carried out a number of activities related to their purpose of "ensuring abused women have access to appropriate emergency services."

Activities included:

- *Development of a community directory of all services available within the district, and in the nearest urban centre. The directory was put in waiting areas of all agency offices, and was promoted in local newspapers.*
- *Hosting a one-day seminar for all district professionals who might have contact with family violence, to let them know about each other's services and referral procedures, and to let them know about services available in the nearest urban centre.*
- *Sponsoring a series of evening and one-day in-service training events to help professionals identify family violence, and learn effective intervention strategies.*
- *Initially the group planned to develop a 24-hour crisis line. Difficulties of how to preserve the anonymity of callers and volunteers in a small community — especially for people on a party line — convinced the group to go a different route. They are in the process of arranging a system whereby district residents can call toll-free to an urban crisis line which knows about Evergreen District services, and which can call back-up people in Evergreen District.*
- *Recruiting and training volunteer drivers who could take abused women to emergency shelter outside the District.*
- *After exploring the possibilities of providing emergency shelter within the district, the group felt the district couldn't afford to support a shelter. However, it did arrange for three anonymous homes in the country to be available as a "stopping place" for a few hours while emergency transportation could be arranged to emergency shelter outside the district.*



STAGE FIVE: EVALUATE AND CELEBRATE — REJUVENATION PHASE

At regular intervals — every few months in the early stages, and at least once a year later on — a group should assess and celebrate its progress, decide "How can we do it even better?" and "Where do we go from here?"

The Stop Violence Coalition in Metro City had established three criteria by which they would measure the project's effectiveness:

1. *An increase in calls to the Violence Helpline.*
2. *Increase in request for service to community agencies.*
3. *Decrease in the number of assaults handled by police during the campaign.*

Following the campaign, the Stop Violence Coalition reviewed each aspect of the campaign and made recommendations for the next year's activities.

(Our Metro City story was adapted from campaigns carried out by volunteer, government, religious and business representatives in Kansas City in 1982-83, and 1983-84. The "STOP Violence Planning Guide," listed in the bibliography in the resource kit, describes their experience.)

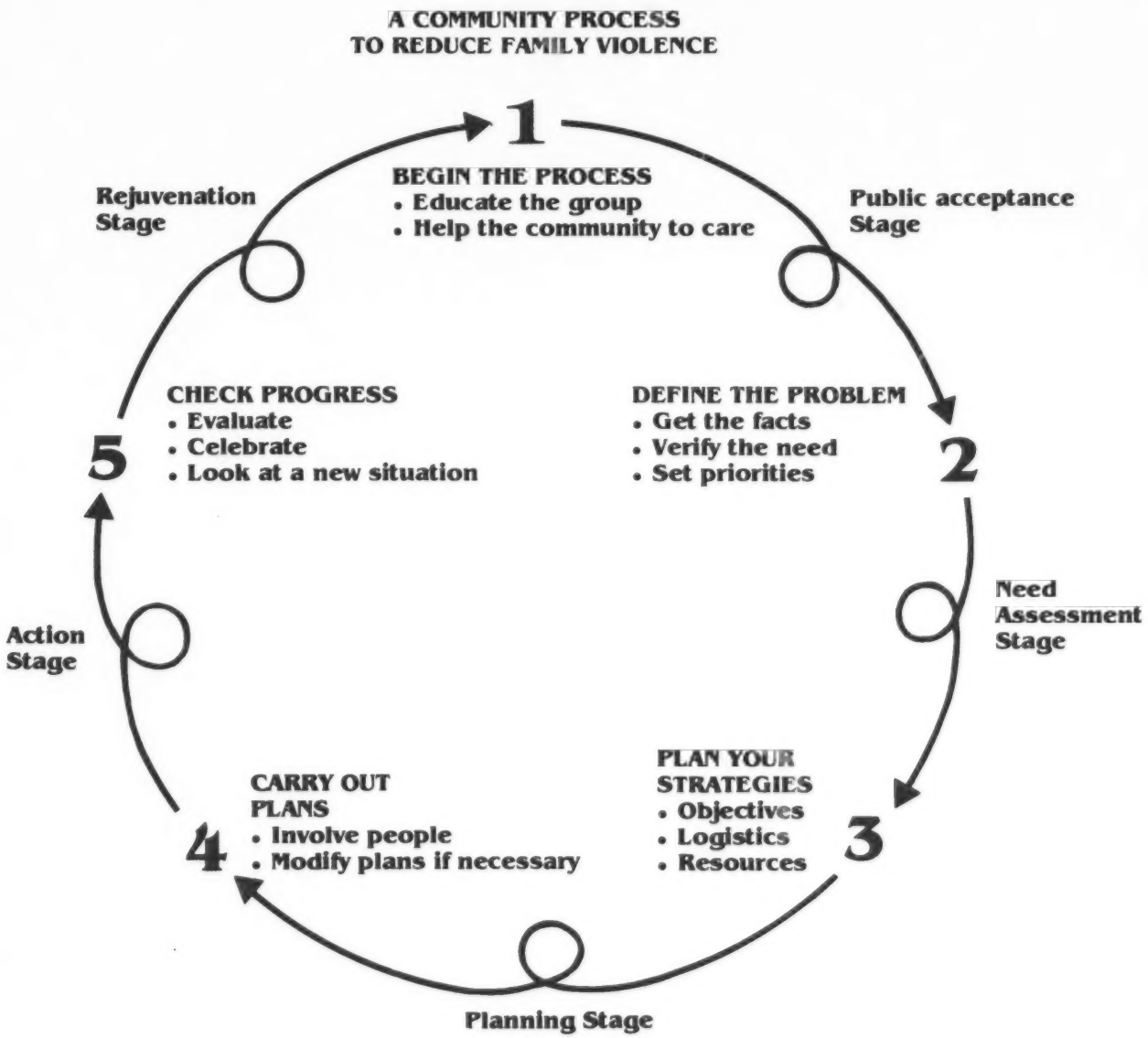
The Evergreen District co-ordinating committee had developed the following criteria to evaluate their efforts:

1. *Increase in calls and referrals to local services.*
2. *Professional self-evaluation re value of in-services.*
3. *Increase in calls to urban crisis line from Evergreen District residents.*
4. *Use of volunteer transportation network.*

The co-ordinating committee now plans to update the community directory, hold further in-services, and develop volunteers to stay in touch with women who return from emergency shelters.

(Our Evergreen District story incorporates experiences of rural Alberta communities who are collaborating to develop district approaches to family violence. Your regional co-ordinator, listed in the resource kit, may know of community groups in your region.)

Following a community process has greatly increased your chances of ensuring that "what's needed" to reduce family violence in your community becomes available.



At a minimum, you have raised community awareness, become better informed yourselves, and learned many new skills. At best, you have changed community attitudes, you have helped the community provide support to those in violent relationships and to those who work with them, and you have helped to reduce family violence in your community.

Congratulations!

SECTION FOUR:

THE PEOPLE WHO HELPED WITH THIS HANDBOOK

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